NEW BRUNSWICK
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE (FSL)
PROGRAM REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

SEPTEMBER 15, 2000

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS LLP
SAINT JOHN, NB
E2L 4B9

102-01280/

Table of Contents

Table of Contents 1
Executive Summary 1
Introduction 11
Our Understanding of the Background and Issues Concerning the French Second Language (FSL) Program in the New Brunswick School System 11
Evaluation Research Methodology 18
Field Research Findings and Conclusions 20
Issue 1: What is the most effective French Second Language Program (FSL) organization that can be used to achieve the goals for FSL instruction in New Brunswick? 20
Summary of Findings 20
Our Conclusions 24
Issue 2: "What viable alternatives are there to the current programs in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?" 26
Summary of Findings 27
Our Conclusions 29
Issue 3: "How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?" 31
Summary of Findings 31
Our Conclusions 33
Issue 4: "What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of FSL programs offerings?" 35
Summary of Findings 35
Our Conclusions 36
Issue 5: To what extent are the identified objectives for the French Second Language programs met? 37
Summary of Findings 37
Our Conclusions 38
Issue 6: What is the impact of current French Second Language programs on the total population of anglophone students in the Province? 40
Summary of Findings 40
Our Conclusions 45

Appendix A - First Level Field Research Summary 48
Appendix B - New Brunswick Second Language Oral Proficiency Exam Scale 94

Executive Summary

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP have undertaken an evaluation of the French as a Second Language (FSL) programs in New Brunswick. The evaluation study was mandated by the New Brunswick Department of Education.

Six questions (or issues) formed the basis of the evaluation. These questions were developed by Department officials through an extended and broadly based consultation with a variety of persons drawn from groups who participated in the FSL programs or were considered to have an interest in aspects of the FSL programs.

Throughout this report we present our findings and conclusions to each of the issues. In addition, we have provided recommendations under separate cover. The various issues are now reviewed along with a high level overview of our findings and conclusions to each.

Issue 1 asked, "What is the most effective FSL organization that can be used to achieve the goals for FSL instruction in New Brunswick?" Specifically, goals are defined as the levels of French Proficiency the Province outlines for the each program. These goals are described in greater detail in Appendix B.

Findings

Major strengths of the FSL programs as reported to us were:

- Most often, the early immersion entry point (grade 1);
- In fewer instances, but still often, the optional later entry point (grade 6); and
- Time on task was considered to be program strength of the Immersion programs.

Major weaknesses of the FSL programs were considered to be:

- Time on task, especially in the Non-immersion program, and
- The grade 6 entry option, specifically by selected DPAC chairs and parents of non-immersion parents and some teachers.

Most frequently, the immersion program was seen to have a negative impact of the non-immersion program. Invariably, the negative impact that was suggested involved some variation of what is commonly referred to as streaming. (We have very limited evidence that streaming actually occurs. We speak further to this perceived impact in our discussion of Issue 6.)

Proficiency testing results of early grade Immersion and non-immersion students are similar to national trends. Middle and high school immersion students consistently scored higher than the non-immersion students. High school testing results are not as conclusive as the early and middle school results.

The goals of the FSL programs, as outlined in Policy 309, are not well known among parents of students. Many parents of immersion program students expect grade 12 graduates to be fluently bilingual. This is not the goal of the program as stated in Policy 309.

Conclusions

The entry point aspect of the program appeared to be the most positive feature of the program. While grade 1 entry is seen by many to be an extremely valuable aspect of the FSL programs, the grade 6 entry option also demonstrates sound advantages. Grade 6 entry students consistently perform at a level closer to their intended goal. As well, the grade 6 option allows for a more complete assessment of the learning skills of candidates before they enter the FSL programs.

Time on task and an increased emphasis on oral skills are most frequently perceived to be the areas where program strengthening is warranted.

While selected groups have periodically raised the issue of teacher proficiency as a weakness of the FSL programs, especially as it relates to French language professionals instructing in non-French language courses, we could not consistently find valid and reliable evidence to support this perception. In our view, conditions for teacher proficiency as defined by Policy 309 are sound.

We detected significantly lower levels of understanding of FSL programs goals among parents of non-immersion students in comparison to the parents of immersion students. Parents direct involvement within the FSL programs appears to influence the level of understanding of the FSL programs goals.

Parents of FSL students, especially those associated with immersion students, have a series of expectations concerning the benefits of the FSL programs to their children that go beyond the stated goals of the program. These broader objectives may not always be subservient to the stated goals and objectives of the FSL programs.

There appears to be a correlation between participation in the immersion, non-immersion program and distinct learning environments. We cannot conclude on the cause and effect relationship of this situation, especially as it applies to "streaming." We will speak further to this in a later section of this report.

Issue 2 presented the question, "What viable alternatives are there to the current program in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?" We examined this issue with Department officials and outside researchers, and then presented two alternatives to a broader audience to be discussed.

- Alternative 1, involved a grade 3 / grade 6 immersion entry plus a core alternative including features related to the current program and teacher proficiency guidelines.
- Alternative 2, involved a kindergarten / grade 6 immersion entry option plus adjusted core alternative including features related to full year grades 9 and 10 of the core program and earlier introduction of English language arts instruction to immersion students.

Findings

Respondents suggested that both alternatives would have a negative or at least a minimal effect on the students' FSL proficiency, as well as on their proficiency in science and math.

Moreover, respondents suggested that these alternatives would not significantly alleviate the challenges the non-immersion program teachers and students currently experiencing.

Implementing either alternative would most likely increase costs.

Conclusions

It is highly improbable that the Department could develop and implement a program that would satisfy all individuals and groups associated with or interested in FSL programs. Many groups generally favour a single entry point for immersion at grade 3 or 4, or an enhanced or extended core program for all students. Immersion advocates are most supportive of the early immersion.

The Department may be required to respond to a combination of challenges on the current FSL organization. In our view, the best adjustment to the collective pressures of these considerations is to implement the grade 3 / grade 6 immersion entry option as outlined in Alternative 1, with the core FSL arrangements as outlined in Alternative 2 (compulsory to grade 8 with full year instruction in grades 9 and 10).

We are aware that the implementation of this alternative will meet an amount of resistance from selected groups, especially those who advocate FSL immersion opportunities.

We received many comments concerning difficult classroom conditions faced by non-immersion students and teachers. In many cases, these difficulties were attributed to the classroom composition of special needs students. We will address this point in greater detail in issue 6.

Issue 3 examined, "How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?"

Findings

An external review completed in 1998 reported that, out of all assessment instruments reviewed, the grade 12 French Oral Proficiency Exam Assessment establishes and maintains reliability most effectively.

The grade 6 reading and writing test now in use is valid and reliable

Respondents advocated assessment testing of FSL capabilities in more grades and an expanded evaluation of FSL programs, especially at the school level.

Conclusions

The Department wide assessment programs in place, namely the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Test and the grade 6 French Second Language Proficiency Exam, are valid and reliable.

Additional testing aids at the classroom level are warranted. There is strong support for instructional aids that would allow FSL students and teachers to identify specific weaknesses.

There is strong support for high levels of program delivery monitoring, especially as it relates to teachers' French language proficiency, competencies related to second language pedagogy and subject matter expertise, time on task adherence to Policy 309, adequate resources and methods for immersion students, and curriculum adherence, and consistency throughout the Province.

The various roles and responsibilities associated with accountability are not sufficiently and clearly documented. Moreover, they are not approved at the most senior levels of the Department.

Issue 4 probed, "What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of FSL programs offerings?"

Findings

Almost all respondents suggested that additional assessments are preferred; especially oral French assessments in grades 5 and 8 are preferable.

An assessment to diagnose problem areas in early grades is required.

Classroom level assessments are often used to evaluate student performance.

The current formal assessments do not help students and teachers identify weaknesses. Specifically, the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam is not helpful for students and teachers to identify and address individual student weaknesses.

Conclusions

Implementing more frequent evaluations would increase time and financial requirements for the Department. Our best estimate is that assessment costs would double if the Oral Proficiency Exam was strengthened to the level most often reported to be desirable. Time and cost issues were suggested as the primary reasons for discontinuing prior assessments.

In-class and teacher led assessments appeared to be acceptable additional assessment methods that can be applied and will allow for cost control in doing so. We cannot conclude that the additional assessment system in place provides valid and reliable results. The assessments now in place provide teaching staff and students with information that assists the instructional / learning process.

There is a strong requirement for resource materials that will assist in diagnosing performance and learning difficulties at an individual level.

Issue 5 asked, "To what extent are the identified objectives for the French Second Language programs met?"

Findings

42% of students tested on the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) attained stated objectives in 1999. Over the past five years 25% of core students, 46% of intermediate immersion students, and 36% of early immersion students have achieved the proficiency level goals of the FSL programs.

The early immersion students have shown consistent results during this five-year period. In 1999, 38% of students achieved the advanced level of student proficiency, up from a low of 32% five years ago.

Time on task (non-compliance to Policy 309) and limited high school French offerings were most frequently reported to us to impact the number of students achieving targeted levels. The 'Provincial Status' document indicated that two districts were identified as suffering 'serious' lack of compliance, and three districts flagged with 'minor' compliance issues. Current levels of compliance are not exactly known as of the writing of this report. Motivation to concentrate on sciences, math, and English at the high school level was also cited as reasons that many students from all programs do not achieve certain goals.

Only 23% of grade 12 students participated in the OPE in 1998 and 1999. There is a 7% retention rate through grade 12 by core enrolment in the FSL programs. Up to 38% of students either dropped immersion, dropped out of school, or moved out of the Province. Overall, these figures indicate that significant high school attrition is apparent in immersion.

Conclusions

We consider the overall results on the Oral Proficiency Exam to be stable, but not necessarily successful. The Department does not have defined thresholds for the OPE to which would determine reasonable results. Many persons have described attaining the goals of each program similar to achieving 100% on a test. Much confusion exists concerning program expectations relative to OPE results.

There is no Department goal statement regarding FSL retention. In 1998-1999, 24% of the grade 12 student population achieved the goals of the program. Stated another way, only 10% of all students reached FSL programs goals in 1999. Further steps are required by the Department to ensure greater levels of program retention and success in the higher grades.

Issue 6 asked, "What is the impact of the current FSL programs on the total population of anglophone students in the Province?" We analysed the negative and positive aspects for each program as well as their effects on one another.

Findings

Learning in the first language is considered to be the most positive aspect of the non-immersion program. Combined with the later entry option, non-immersion students in the early grades have the advantage of building core competencies in English (rather than in French). Moreover, it allows students to decide in grade 5 whether entry into the intermediate immersion program is appropriate.

FSL supervisors and CPF members perceived that the non-immersion program generally receive more support on the part of the administration and more resources and methods support than does the immersion programs. However, no empirical evidence was provided to support this opinion. Immersion teachers, to a lesser extent, suggested that if there were more resources and methods in immersion than there might be more special needs students in immersion.

During our interviews, more negative than positive features of the non-immersion program were raised with us. Most frequently, persons reported that there are more behavioural and special needs students in non-immersion classrooms. This in turn created a wider variety of learners. Consequently, teachers often teach at a lower level, leaving the more capable students in the non-immersion program unchallenged. There is very limited Departmental data to support or to refute this perspective. On a few occasions, non-immersion program teachers provided local classroom statistics as evidence for their comments.

Report card result trends indicate immersion students significantly outperform non-immersion students in grade 8. Moreover, preliminary data indicates the same trend in grade 11 performance assessments.

Many respondents suggested that non-immersion students have a less challenging and fulfilling learning environment than do immersion students. Parents sometimes reported concern with the negative stigma attached to the non-immersion program and its participants.

Developing highly proficient students in their second official language, and the job opportunities that result, are perceived to be the most positive aspect of the immersion programs. The Provincial assessment results confirm that immersion students have developed French competencies to a greater extent than their core program counterparts.

Class sizes are thought by many to be smaller in immersion. Overall, Departmental data suggests that there is little difference in class size between the non-immersion and immersion programs. In 1998-1999, the average Pupil Educator Ratio (PER) in grades K-8 in immersion was 24.7 versus 25.1 for non-immersion classrooms. Alternatively, the average class sizes for immersion and non-immersion in grades 11 and 12 were 22.35 and 18.67 respectively. We were not able to review data at the school level.

A perceived lack of resources and adequate instructional methods were the most frequently cited negative aspect of immersion programs.

The perception exists that there are not sufficiently convenient course offerings in high school for immersion students. It is seen to negatively impact the students' ability to develop French skills in high school. Alternatively, a teacher group reported that parents and students are more concerned with sciences, math, and English at the high school level. As such, the priority of learning French is lost in the later grades.

The lobbying activities of immersion advocacy groups were seen to have a negative impact on the non-immersion program.

Nearly all groups reported that 'streaming' is evident. We reviewed the information offered to us in support of the perspective that streaming is occurring with Department of Education officials. In response, they acknowledged that conditions reflective of various aspects of streaming may well exist in selected instances and locations. The additional evidence that Department officials reported as necessary in order to more completely understand the situation includes detail instructional aids and methodologies currently being applied in the immersion program, PER at the classroom level across the Province, and the specialist learning/teaching resources available to both immersion and non-immersion programs.

As well, Department officials indicated they require follow - up information on students who complete immersion programs.

Conclusions

The perceived conditions associated with the each (immersion and non-immersion) program are very dissimilar. There are indications that immersion programs are considered to be highly successful. Oral Proficiency Exam results support this perception. In addition, there is support for the belief that active and highly visible immersion programs have created a positive influence on French learning for all students. Only 10% of core students remain in the FSL programs through grade 12. This is cause for concerns.

Non-immersion program is perceived to be much less successful. The heavy and vocal emphasis on the immersion programs may well have devalued participation in the core program. We are of the belief that this perception is not one that professional educators would want to encourage, even inadvertently.

In our view, the objectives and goals of the immersion programs are clearly defined by the Department. Just as the diversity of reasons parents apply when enrolling their child in the programs. We suspect that there may be instances when parents rank these other reasons at a higher priority as they reflect on the desired outcomes associated with their child's participation in immersion programs. The Department can do little if anything to control this situation.

One frequent perceived benefit of immersion programs related to their positive impacts on future employment opportunities. This also appears to be motivating some parents when they consider enrolling their children in immersion programs. Department officials wish more data on this effect. We agree that this information is important. We support Department officials in their assessment of the requirement for more complete information in this area.

In our view, the perception of "streaming" as an outcome of the immersion programs is very strong across selected groups. Most frequently, the negative impacts of streaming reported to us included unacceptably high levels of behavioural problems and efforts teachers were required to dedicate to other challenged students in the non-immersion program.

Senior level Department officials expressed the need to gain additional information on the conditions respondents attributed to streaming. The additional information requirements they identified would allow for a more complete understanding of both the magnitude of the outcomes most often cited as evidence of streaming and the instances in which these conditions were most evident. In our view the information requirements Department officials defined are the appropriate first step in addressing the streaming concerns that were expressed to us.

Whether or not streaming is actually occurring and regardless of its magnitude, we are of the belief that groups adopt strategies and tactics on the basis of this perception. The outcome of the perception is, in our view, that many act to criticize aspects of the FSL programs, sometimes in the absence of sound confirming evidence, as part of a strategy to improve conditions in non-immersion classrooms.

It can be argued those participants in, and advocates of, the immersion programs contribute to the atmosphere of conflict that we noticed between the immersion and other programs. We witnessed instances in which persons spoke negatively or less than respectfully of participants in the non-immersion program. Comments such as these may not contribute to the harmony between participants and advocates of both

programs. Such instances may not contribute to setting the stage for addressing any perceived weaknesses of the FSL programs or various features of the non-immersion program.

Introduction

PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP is please to submit our final report to the Department of Education as a result of RFP # 920-0010, for the evaluation of the French Second Language (FSL) program in the New Brunswick school system. Within the body of this report, we present our key findings and conclusions, and Appendix A provides a more detailed summary of our findings.

We now describe our understanding and background issues concerning the FSL programs.

Our Understanding of the Background and Issues Concerning the French Second Language (FSL) Program in the New Brunswick School System

The following is our understanding of the FSL programs in New Brunswick School System and the issues on which this Evaluation Study focussed. This understanding is based on discussions with Cary Grobe, Ed.D, Director Evaluation, Barry P. Lydon, A/ Assistant Deputy Minister (previously Director, Curriculum), and John McLaughlin, Director of Education, School District 15; and on our review of documentation available to the team.

In 1969, New Brunswick officially became a bilingual province. In 1974, the Department of Education established the Francophone/Anglophone model that consists in two parallel but separate education systems. The organizational structure supporting the two models is comprised of two Deputy Ministers responsible for each educational system. The Anglophone school educational services for Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K to 12) are the responsibility of the Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) Anglophone Education Services Division. This division is in charge for the development of the curriculum for Anglophone students and for the evaluation and assessment of students. The division also comprises twelve (12) school districts, with five (5) superintendents who report directly to the ADM.

Over the last 25 years, a major priority of the Anglophone sector of the Department of Education is to provide all students with the opportunity to acquire a reasonable degree of fluency in the other official language of the Province. The Department has developed and implemented French Second Language (FSL) education programs within the Anglophone system to meet this priority. In 1994, the Department implemented Policy 309, which provides direction for the provision of FSL programs in New Brunswick schools and is the successor to Policy 501. Policy 309 provides direction for the provision of the FSL programs, whereas Policy 501 provided structure for immersion programs only.

A key feature of FSL programs, as defined in Policy 309, is to provide the student's parents, with a direct choice on their child's education path through the three FSL programs offerings: core program (involving French language instruction for 30 to 60 minutes per day depending on grade level); and the two immersion programs (early, in grade 1 and intermediate, in grade 6). The core program is offered in all English speaking schools. The two French immersion Programs are optional and are offered in local schools where interest and a sufficient number of students (approximately 26) exist. Interest has been sufficient to deliver immersion programs in every district in the Province, though not in every school. Immersion programs have flourished in many areas across the Province of New Brunswick (NB), thus allowing it to have the highest comparative enrolment rates in French immersion to the rest of the country.

Typically the classrooms for immersion and non-immersion students are in the same school. Initially, the school district in Saint John opted to locate all of its French immersion students in one school. Although Saint John continues to offer only French immersion at Milledgeville North School, more recently Saint John has implemented French immersion programs in several community schools.

District FSL Supervisors have the responsibility of implementing and operating the FSL programs on a day-to-day basis. They also participate in the teacher hiring process. Teachers for the French immersion programs must have a level of proficiency corresponding at the **Superior** level, and core program teachers at the **Advanced Plus** level as defined in the NB Second Language Proficiency Scale. These levels of proficiency are described in Appendix B.

Assessment of student achievement in speaking, writing, and reading proficiencies exist at the Provincial level. There is a province-wide oral proficiency assessment at the end of grade 12. Students receive a 'Certificate of Oral Proficiency' ranging from 'Novice to Superior'. Approximately twelve specially trained independent interviewers, who are also involved in assessing other public language assessment initiatives, administer the test to eligible students on behalf of the Department of Education. Eligible students are those who have completed FSL courses though grade12. In 1998-1999, 1,564 students were tested. Results of the latest assessment showed that 35% of students involved in immersion programs were achieving performance level of Intermediate. Other delivery models for FSL have been considered. Variations reflecting differing entry points, as well as, variations reflecting differing degrees of subject instruction in the French language have been used throughout the Districts and have subsequently been phased out due to Policy 309. Examples of the entry and instructional models that have been implemented on a pilot basis include:

- Middle immersion at grade 3 and/or at grade 4 in Salisbury, Fredericton, in one school in Moncton. A grade 4 entry point model is argued by some to be the most effective model as it allows the student to first develop a foundation for English reading and writing skills in grades 1 through 3;

- Extended Core (defined as the current non-immersion program plus one other course taught in French);

- District 15 (Bathurst) had offered partial an immersion program with a 50/50 time split between English and French language, where English is spoken one half of the school day and French is spoken the other half. Although we understand this model has been used successfully in other jurisdictions of Canada, it was discontinued in New Brunswick (in Bathurst) due to Policy 309. We understand that Department officials received expressions of both support and criticism for this delivery model variation;

- Enhanced Core is another variation. It is defined as the current non-immersion program plus an additional amount of time (perhaps 60 minutes a day) to which students study in French on additional material (not compulsory material); and

- A 1993 report by Rehorick[1] suggested that though it was perceived that five programs were in place at that time, there were roughly 18 variations throughout the Province.

The following table provides a summary of the key characteristics of each program.

Table 1: Summary of the key Characteristics of each program.

Program	Goals	Availability	Entry Point	Method	Structure
Core French	To achieve a degree of proficiency corresponding to Intermediate Level	- All English-administered schools - Compulsory from grades 1 to 10 for all students not enrolled in one of the immersion programs - High School shall offer opportunity to continue for grades 11 & 12	Grade 1	Instruction in French within prescribed period	Minimum total of 1300 hours of instruction - One period of instruction each day: - Grades 1 to 5: 30 min - Grades 6 to 8: 40 min - Grades 9 to 10 45 min or 75 min per semester - Optional in Grades 11 to 12

[1] Rehorick, Sally, 1993 French Second Language Learning in New Brunswick Schools Paradigms, Challenges and Strategies

Early French Immersion	To achieve a degree of proficiency corresponding to **Advanced Level**	- Optional - Available where there is interest and sufficient demand (critical mass) - Begins in grade 1 to grade 12	Grade 1	Alternative approach e.g. second language used as the medium of instruction Initial phase: concentration of instruction in French Second phase: Gradual increase of instruction in English	Minimum of 6600 hours: Grade 1-3: 90% - Grades 4 to 5 80% - Grades 6 to 8 70% - Grades 9 to 10: 50% - Grades 11 &12: 3 credits in French
Intermediate French Immersion	To achieve a degree of proficiency corresponding to **Intermediate Plus Level**	- Optional - Available where there is interest and sufficient demand (critical mass) - Begins in grade 6 to grade 12	Grade 6	Alternative approach e.g. second language used as the medium of instruction Initial phase: concentration of instruction in French Second phase: gradual increase of instruction in English	Minimum of 3750 hours - Grades 1 to 5: Core - Grades 6 to 8: 70% - Grades 9 to 10: 50% - Grades 11 to 12: 3 credits in French

Source: Policy 309 and discussions with Department officials

Since the advent of early immersion in the mid-1970, the Province's FSL programs have received much professional and public attention. In addition to Department authorized studies by both internal and external researchers, the Department has received a number of anecdotal reports and comments, solicited and unsolicited, regarding the FSL programs. These reports and comments have been authored by a range of sources for audiences including, but not limited to: Departmental Officials (such as FSL supervisors, other Supervisors, FSL teachers, teachers of other subjects within the non-immersion program, immersion teachers, and immersion principals), parents of students (non-immersion and immersion), second language instruction researchers, District Parent Advisory Councils (DPAC's) members, School Parent Advisory Committees (SPAC's) members, Provincial School Board members, Federation of Home & School Associations Inc. members, and Canadian Parents for French members.

Some examples of the reports and comments that have been received by Department Officials as reported to us include the followings:

- The publication on the Report Card' 99 providing the results of the annual assessment revived the debates on the effectiveness of the current FSL programs. Students in the French immersion programs

have significantly outperformed non-immersion program students in various provincial testing initiatives such as the Middle Level English Language Proficiency Assessment, where immersion students achieved a success rate of 89% (87% early immersion, 91% intermediate immersion) compared to 64% successful non-immersion program students[2]. Similar findings have been found in the Middle Level Mathematics Assessment and the grade 3 Provincial Assessment[3]. Immersion students outperformed non-immersion students in reading, writing, and mathematics. Non-immersion students marginally outperformed immersion students in science (77% and 70% respectively). In response to these and previously similar assessment results, Department officials have received comments and reports supporting a perception or view that immersion programs have the 'best and brightest' students, safer classes, and smaller class sizes. These elements foster a superb environment for learning. On the other hand, the perception of the non-immersion program is that it has less safe schools, has to dedicate resources and effort to support students who have special needs. This in turn creates an environment that does not foster optimum learning. Department officials have received comments and reports from others that support the view that there are not enough resources and methods in place to support children with special needs in immersion programs. An alternative viewpoint suggests that parents of students with special needs tend not to enrol in French immersion classes, thus making these supports unnecessary.

- A number of comments and reports have been received which favour either an early entry (grade 1) model, a intermediate entry model, or a choice entry model. For example, the Lapkin/Hart Report (1991)[4] concludes that there is a direct correlation between the number of hours spent in French immersion and the level of student's proficiency in French. This same report supports the position that the early immersion model is the most effective delivery method in achieving Policy 309's stated goals. This is the argument of the early entry proponents.

- Parents of students have provided a number of comments, directly and indirectly, for the consideration of Department Officials. For example, preliminary indications, of a 1999 survey of approximately 8,000 parents, suggest that French immersion programs are perceived by many respondents as safer, more student focused, and as foster a better overall learning environment. Further, the parents of immersion students tend to report that they are generally happier with the education system.

- Department Officials report that a large majority of immersion students, when given the option of taking a national test in science or math will elect to read and write the test in English. Department officials report that this trend has been cited as support for the view that immersion students are not

[2] Report Card '99, p. 31
[3] Report Card '99, p 40 and p 48

performing as well in critical subjects such as science and math at the middle and high school levels. For this reason, some immersion student parents would like to modify the program where these subjects are taught in English.

- Department Officials report a frequent parent expectation that the FSL student will be 'fluently bilingual' at the end of their scholarship (grade 12). Education officials have indicated to us that 'bilingualism' is not the goal of the FSL programs, but rather a defined level of French proficiency for each FSL program. They also reported to us that this expectation is difficult to manage and is a challenge to the Department.

- Department Officials have received comments concerning the rational parents apply when enrolling their children in FSL immersion programs. Initially, when the program was created, parents may have been motivated to enrol their children in a program that would deliver a highly proficient level of French and also help to secure more and better job opportunities for their children. Through the years, parents may have been motivated by perceived immediate social outcomes of these FSL programs. For example, they may have been motivated to enrol their children in immersion programs since all of the children's friends or children of parent's friends are in the program, there are fewer student-related distractions in the classroom, and the learning environment benefits from a more involved group of parents.

- Some non-immersion program teachers have expressed the view to Department Officials that the immersion teachers have smaller class sizes to manage and/or teach in an environment of 'good' students, not 'special needs' students. If true, this latter point could result in more time spent by non-immersion program teachers responding to the requirements of less able students and resolving classroom behavioural problems, a situation some non-immersion teachers believe is *not* as prevalent in immersion classes.

- Department officials have received reports and comments expressing the view that the FSL programs teachers are considered to be dedicated and competent resources who strongly believe in their programs. It has also been reported to Officials that FSL teachers and supervisors are considered to be vocal and strong advocates of Policy 309. Some of these teachers have strongly supported more testing throughout the programs. Many FSL programs teachers perceived that they frequently have to 'justify' their programs.

---

[4] Hart, Lapkin, Swain, 1991 Comparative Evaluation of Modes of Delivery of FSL in the Maritime Provinces: The Case of French Immersion at Grade 9. OISE, Modern Language Centre

- Comments concerning the level of resources in terms of time and money allocated to training and re-training French Second Language teachers have been received by Department officials. The resources that have been commented on are those that are perceived as dedicated to either re-tooling to expand subject expertise and / or those dedicated to, acquiring or maintaining the level of proficiency required to instruct in the appropriate programs. French immersion programs are sometimes criticized due to the teachers general knowledge base, not necessarily subject matter experts (SME's) in a particular subject as can be argued for non-immersion program teachers delivering one subject, notably in grades 7 to 12.

- As well, more costly and less available French immersion curriculum materials present a challenge to the Department. There is a higher dollar/student ratio for curriculum materials for immersion students.

The Provincial School Board has had concerns regarding the FSL programs and has requested an evaluation. Other issues to push this evaluation to proceed include asking the question – "are our standards too high"? In order to respond to this request, the Department undertook to develop the issues on which the evaluation would focus through a Delphi approach. This approach polls a variety of stakeholders and allows for anonymity, and time for reflection. Using this method, school administrators, the New Brunswick Teachers' Association (NBTA), L'Association des enseignantes et des enseignants francophones du Nouveau-Brunswick (AEFNB), Canadian Parents for French (CPF), the Provincial Board of Education and District Parent Advisory Councils (DPAC's), select School Parent Advisory Committees (SPAC's), NB Home and School Association as well as several MLA's and university professors were asked a series of questions.

As a result, the following six issues for evaluation purposes were defined:

1. What is the most effective French Second Language programs organization that can be used to achieve the goals for French Second Language instruction in New Brunswick?
2. What viable alternatives are there to the current programs in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?
3. How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?
4. What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of French Second Language programs offerings?
5. To what extent are the identified objectives for the French Second Language programs met?
6. What is the impact of current French Second Language programs on the total population of anglophone students in the Province?

Through a tendering process, PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP was mandated to complete the Evaluation Study.

Evaluation Research Methodology

The following describes our overall field workplan and multiple lines of evidence approach we adopted in completing the Evaluation Study.

We held an initial series of planning meetings with Department officials. Among other key outcomes of these planning sessions were detailed research questions associated with the various evaluation issues. These research questions by issue are provided in Appendix A. As well, the outcomes of these planning sessions included decisions related to the information sources that would be accessed for evaluation indicators; and information and agreement of the relative priorities of the various evaluation issues.

Specifically, information sources that were considered and accepted, in addition to Departmental records and other published research reports, were:

- Outside researcher opinion
- FSL supervisors
- Non-immersion program teachers (and principals)
- Immersion programs teachers (and principals)
- Parents of non-immersion students
- Parents of immersion students
- CPF members
- Department officials
- Non-immersion program students
- Immersion program students
- District Parent Advisory Council (DPAC)

Department officials identified three evaluation issues as the highest priority among the six evaluation issues. Data and information to address these was gathered in all districts and from various stakeholders. The three highest priority issues are:

Issue 1: What is the most effective French Second Language programs (FSL) organization that can be used to achieve the goals for FSL instruction in New Brunswick?

Issue 2: "What viable alternatives are there to the current programs in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?"

Issue 6: What is the impact of current French Second Language programs on the total population of anglophone students in the Province?

The remaining issues were reported to us to be of less priority among the 6 issues. Accordingly:

Issue 3: How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?

- **Information to address this issue was gained from the Crocker Report (an evaluation of various assessment instruments the Department utilizes), outside experts, department officials and FSL supervisors. This issue was discussed with 60% of district based information sources.**

Issue 4: What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of FSL programs offerings?

- **Information was gained form external experts, departmental data reviews, external jurisdiction research, teachers, FSL supervisors and department officials. This issue was discussed with 60% of district based information sources.**

Issue 5: To what extent are the identified objectives for the FSL programs met?

- **This issue was discussed with department officials, teachers and external experts.**

During our Field Research, we held a number of discussion meetings with groups of immersion teachers, non-immersion teachers, parents of immersion and non-immersion students, and non-immersion and immersion students were held in every district, but one. Scheduling difficulties did not allow us to visit this district, but we received several written responses to the issues to which have been incorporated in our analysis. This district had several replies to the six issues from the same types of groups polled in other districts. As well, several department officials and outside researchers were interviewed (face to face and phone) for their perspectives on research questions. DPAC's chairs participated in conference calls in which ten of twelve district chairs or members were involved.

All correspondence we received from various individuals and groups, including SPAC's and the NBTA, was reviewed and taken into consideration where possible and appropriate.

Field Research Findings and Conclusions

Issue 1: What is the most effective French Second Language Program (FSL) organization that can be used to achieve the goals for FSL instruction in New Brunswick?

The goals for the FSL programs are defined in Table 1.

We examined this issue from a number of perspectives including outside expert opinion, FSL supervisors, teachers, students, and parents associated with multiple programs.

In researching perspectives concerning "effectiveness" we asked respondents to describe to us:

- Program strengths;
- Program weaknesses;
- Beneficial impacts of the various FSL programs on each other; and
- Program expectations.

We looked at "FSL organization" in terms of:

- Entry point;
- Time on task;
- Teacher proficiency;
- Student critical mass; and
- Program goals.

Summary of Findings

The major strength of the FSL programs reported to us was the early immersion entry point. The most frequent perspective we heard was that the grade 1 entry point offered students the opportunity to begin learning a second language at the earliest possible grade level. Respondents cited evidence in support of this perspective, both of an anecdotal and research nature.

The optional later entry point feature was also reported to be a strength of the FSL programs, but in fewer instances.

Time on task was considered to be a program strength of the immersion programs. However, this feature was not reported to be a strength of the non-immersion program.

Less frequently, no one feature of the program was consistently reported to us to be more important than the others in enabling the FSL programs to meet its objectives. That is entry point, time on task, teacher proficiency, and student critical mass were all perceived to be equally important in contributing to FSL programs success.

The major weakness of the FSL programs reported to us was time on task, especially as it applied to the non-immersion program. FSL supervisors differed in their perception, suggesting that the time on task requirement for the non-immersion program, as outlined in Policy 309, was a strength of the program once Policy 309 is fully implemented and adhered to.

We did receive reports that the intermediate entry option was seen to be a program weakness, in that it contributed a streaming effect. Those respondents offered this perspective, suggested that the immersion programs offer more motivated students (and possibly more intelligent students) to an enriched learning environment. This perspective was not offered to us by all groups we interviewed, or at each district level. Selected DPAC's chairs, non-immersion parents and teachers, and non-immersion students in selected districts offered this perspective to us. As well, one of the research experts from outside the Department offered this perspective.

The immersion program was seen to have impacts, both positive and negative, on the non-immersion program. There were frequent reports that non-immersion students gained opportunities to converse in French and were exposed to the French language because immersion programs were located in their school.

More frequently, we were offered the perspective that immersion programs had negative impacts on the non-immersion program. The negative impacts that were mentioned by the various groups most often related to the "streaming effect" as mentioned above. Examples of streaming that we most frequently heard included: more motivated students in immersion classrooms, fewer behavioural problems encountered by immersion students and teachers in the classroom environments, more learning disabled students in non-immersion program and a higher level of involvement by parents of immersion students. While every group with whom we discussed this issue did not report negative impacts of the immersion programs on the non-immersion program, still there were a large number of such reports across all groups. Also included as a negative impact on the non-immersion program were reports of higher levels of involved parents for immersion students.

In all cases, respondents who reported these perceptions relied on anecdotal evidence to support their perceptions.

Trends in English language, mathematics, and science proficiency testing indicate that differences in the scores of immersion and non-immersion students inconsistently vary. In the early grades, immersion students outperform non-immersion students on some subjects and achieve lower scores on others. The achievement results of these early grade students are not completely similar to national test results as reported to us. At the middle school, immersion students, early and intermediate entry, essentially score at the same levels. At the same time, these two groups consistently score higher than the non-immersion student group.

Test results at the High School level which can display differences in performance and relate it to involvement in the immersion program is only available from the past two years. These results indicate a trend, although inconclusive, similar to the middle school results. An extended period of these test results is required before more sound conclusions can be reached.

Department officials are unable to access national student performance data that segregates immersion from non-immersion student scores. As well, we were unable to gain valid and reliable information concerning university performance of immersion vs. non-immersion students.

Parents report differing understanding and acceptance of FSL goals and objectives. We examined the levels of understanding and acceptance of FSL programs goals for parents of both immersion and non-immersion students. Parents of immersion students reported substantively higher levels of understanding of FSL goals than did parents of non-immersion students. Among this latter group, the level of understanding of the FSL goals as outlined in Policy 309 was reported to be very limited.

Asked about levels of agreement with the FSL goals when they were outlined, parent audiences tended to agree (completely, somewhat or limited) with the goals most often, whether these were parents of non-immersion or Immersion students.

Parents of both non-immersion and immersion student groups reported that the goals of Policy 309 are not well known enough by all parents. All parent groups stated the core French program should be enhanced and that there is lacking motivation to succeed in this program.

We received a number of suggestions to improve the present goals of the program from all groups we interviewed. These included:

- The time on task learning in French is lacking. This presents challenges to achieving the goals of the program;

- A general statement that there should be one program with one goal statement is necessary for all students;
- Similar to the above, but more specific that, all students should strive to attain a level of French proficiency equal to 'Intermediate Plus' on the Oral Proficiency Exam scale;
- An adjustment of one-half of a level downward would be acceptable; and
- The goals should be remain, though students should be recognized one-half of a level below their intended goal.

More than one group noted that parents expect children to be fluently bilingual by the end of grade 12 in immersion programs, which in reality is not the goal of Policy 309. There is not an official, or agreed to, definition to describe 'bilingualism', even amongst dedicated FSL researchers.

Parents and students have moderately different expectations of their respective programs. Purely from a language standpoint, immersion parents and students expect a higher level of French proficiency with an added level of exposure and appreciation of the French culture. On the other hand, core students and their parents expect somewhat lower proficiency where the students have 'modest confidence' to use French. In a few instances, the specific goals of each program were noted as goals. There is a greater emphasis on learning basic French oral skills in the core program.

Parents have a broader variety of expectations than do students. Students reported that they are primarily concerned with oral proficiency levels in French. Immersion parents are much more likely to state that job opportunities are a primary expectation of immersion programs whereas non-immersion parents focussed on French language development. We received perspectives from both sets of parents that expect programs are delivered consistently across the Province and Policy 309 is adhered to. Occasionally, the parents differed in that non-immersion parents are more concerned with the quality of the program and stigma attached to the non-immersion program, whereas, the immersion parents are more concerned with sufficient resources and methods for students in need and to attract more students to immersion programs.

Parents of immersion students are concerned with the reading and writing elements of French equally with oral competency development. However, parents of core program students suggested that oral skills are most important with reading as the next important skills, and then followed by writing as less important skills.

Our Conclusions

Our conclusions concerning the most effective FSL organization are now presented.

The entry point aspects of the program appeared to be the most positive feature of the program. Grade 1 entry students would benefit from the advantages of exposure to a second language learning opportunity at an early age. While many of the perspectives presented to us suggested that early French immersion program is best equipped to achieve intended goals, actual results lead us to conclude that the intermediate immersion program students consistently perform at a level closer to their intended goal, though early French immersion children achieved the highest rates of French proficiency overall. This is consistent with secondary research conducted, from Genesee[5] and Hart, Lapkin and Swain[6]. Other research was cited, but not directly reviewed by us confirming this perspective

The grade 6 entry point option of the program is also a positive feature. This later entry option allows for an alternative other than a single and irrevocable entry choice. At the same time in our view, this later entry point allows students the benefits of extended exposure to instructional and learning situations before a decision to enter an immersion program is required. This extended period of exposure allows parents and educators the opportunity to assess student performance and to diagnose any learning conditions that could adversely affect performance in an immersion environment. In some situations the later entry point might be the only one available to parents. This would happen in a situation (usually less urban) where a number of small cohorts from a number of elementary schools come together at the middle school level and produce the number of students required to justify the formation of an immersion class. We received reports suggesting that immersion programs were less equipped than the non-immersion program to proactively address selected special educational need situations. With a more complete assessment of the learning capabilities of students prior to a "later entry point," learning difficulties of immersion students could possibly be reduced through strengthened remedial resources.

Time on task and an increased emphasis on oral skills are most frequently perceived to be the areas where program strengthening is warranted. In our view, the relative lack of success the program has had in retaining students through grade 12 and results on the Oral Proficiency Exam could be contributing to this perception.

[5] Genesee, F.(1987) Research findings: English language and academic outcomes and French language achievement.
[6] Hart, Lapkin, Swain Op. cit

While selected groups have periodically raised teacher proficiency as a weakness of the FSL programs, especially as it relates to French language professionals instructing in non-French language courses, we could not consistently find valid and reliable evidence to support this perception. In our view, conditions for teacher proficiency, as defined by Policy 309, are sound. Our conclusion is, to a great extent, based on the professional opinion we received from the FSL Supervisors. We note that it is the responsibility of the Department to monitor adherence to Policy 309 conditions to ensure the conditions concerning teacher competency are met.

Program goals and objectives are supported by most of those involved, directly and indirectly in the FSL programs. At the same time, we detected significantly lower levels of understanding of these goals among parents of non-immersion students in comparison to the parents of immersion students. At the same time, parents of immersion students are reported to be more involved in the FSL programs than are parents of non-immersion program students. This, in our view, contributes to the immersion parents' greater level of understanding the FSL programs goals.

We note that, parents of FSL students, especially those associated with immersion students, have a series of expectations concerning the benefits of the FSL programs to their children that go beyond the stated goals of the program. These broader objectives, many of which, in our view, are of an educational and social development nature, may not always be subservient to the stated goals and objectives of the FSL programs.

There appears to be a correlation between participation in the immersion and non-immersion program and distinct learning environments. It has been argued that the organization of students in this manner falls into the category of "streaming". We cannot conclude on the cause and effect relationship of this situation. We will speak further to this in a later section of this report.

Issue 2: "What viable alternatives are there to the current programs in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?"

We examined this issue in a slightly different manner from issue 1. An initial consultation was held with Department officials, FSL supervisors, and outside experts. Although no consensus was achieved, two alternative program structures were developed. The alternatives we developed and subsequently examined are detailed in Appendix A.

Alternative1, which we identify as the **grade 3 / grade 6 immersion entry plus core alternative** includes the following key features:

- Time on task would be similar to the current early immersion program. In grades 3 to 5, 80% of the classroom focus in French. (Language arts would be maintained in English);
- Teacher proficiency guidelines would remain the same for the immersion programs;
- No changes to the core program; and
- No changes to the intermediate immersion program.

Alternative 2, which we identify as the **kindergarten / grade 6 immersion entry option plus adjusted core alternative** includes the following key features:

- Kindergarten entry point with 90% time on task for immersion students;
- Kindergarten entry point for non-immersion students (one class/day, 30 minutes);
- Grades 9 and 10 are optional and are a full year, not semestered for the core program students; and
- Introduce English language arts in grade 3, not grade 4, for the early immersion students.

These two alternatives were presented in every discussion meeting we held in the various Districts. Our definition of viable alternatives considered the following:

- Reasonable evidence to suggest that student proficiency will not be negatively effected by an adjustment, if any, to the program;
- The alternatives can be implemented within the current/projected funding levels; and
- Achieve the same program goals but reduce the internal pressure points on various stakeholders.

To focus on the important aspects of the alternatives, four assessment criterion were described to the discussion meeting participants and impacts on each criterion were also discussed. The four assessment criterion used for this purpose were:

1. What evidence can you provide to suggest student proficiency will/will not be negatively impacted in comparison to what now exists?

2. What evidence can you provide to suggest how the alternative will impact immersion student proficiency in science and math?

3. For non-immersion program: What evidence can you provide to suggest that the alternative will enhance the learning environment relative to the regular (core) program that students and teachers currently experience?

4. What evidence can you provide to suggest that this alternative will not negatively impact the overall cost of delivery?

In addition to the discussion meetings that focused on this issue, evidence was collected from general comments provided in all meetings as well as from our review of written responses from many individuals and groups. Further detail on the alternatives and the manner in which we assessed them is presented in the Appendix A related to this issue.

Summary of Findings

Respondents suggested to us that both alternatives would have a negative or at least a minimal effect on the students' FSL proficiency, as well as on their proficiency in science and math.
Immersion teachers reported that the Grade3 / Grade 6 immersion entry option (Alternative #1) would have the most negative consequences for early immersion students in terms of French language proficiency. It was perceived that this alternative would not allow the students to develop sufficient oral, written, and reading capabilities in the earlier grades. Moreover, it was suggested that entry point at Grade 3 would hinder the students' ability to converse and comprehensively understand instruction in the French language. Consequently, reduced academic performance can be expected from entry point (grade 3) onwards.
The K / Grade 6 immersion entry option was reported to have little or no effect on the science and math competencies in any program. Both teacher groups generally reported that the K entry point could create a certain level of discomfort for parents as they are making an important decision for their child at such young age. In addition, non-immersion teachers perceived that this alternative would have minimal impacts by the end of grade 12 on all programs.

The teacher groups had differing perspectives regarding the core students' proficiency as a result of the additional French that alternative 2 provides for. (Readers will recall that this alternative involved optional but yearlong French language instruction in grades 9 and 10. For core students, therefore, under alternative 2, the decision can be made by the end of grade 8 to cease their French studies). Non-immersion teachers held that overall, the core students' French proficiency would erode, as many would decide to discontinue French at grade 8. The immersion teachers on the other hand, held that only interested students would continue French in the core program and that the Oral Proficiency Exam results would increase.

The alternatives would not significantly alleviate the challenges the non-immersion program teachers and students currently experience. Both teacher groups indicated that grade3 / grade 6 immersion entry alternative may provide greater stability for all students in grades one and two. The non-immersion teachers further suggested that this alternative may create even more streaming for the grade 3 (early) immersion students as compared to the current early immersion structure. Immersion teachers did not agree with this assessment, suggesting that streaming is not as prevalent as it once was. The immersion teachers were undecided whether the first alternative would alleviate the 'pressure points' for the non-immersion program.

The costs of program delivery for the two alternatives could not be determined in the discussion meetings, though preliminary analysis was provided at the Department level. The non-immersion teachers most frequently suggested that the grade 3 / grade 6 immersion entry option would be less expensive than any option which included increased years of delivering immersion programs. Fewer immersion teacher groups agreed with this perspective. Fewer classrooms required the delivering of multiple programs, and more expensive resources and materials were suggested as the incremental costs of delivering immersion programs. Immersion teachers generally reported that the grade 3 / grade 6 immersion entry alternative would have a minimal impact on current program costs.

The opposing view was held for the K / grade 6 immersion entry alternative. Both groups feel that a kindergarten immersion program would cost more due to set-up costs, additional teachers and classrooms required to deliver multiple programs, and teachers' displacement in Kindergarten.

A Departmental analysis confirms this viewpoint. For this Evaluation, the Department Officials conducted an analysis of the costs for the two alternatives. We requested officials of the Department's Financial Services Division to determine the incremental number of classrooms required to deliver the multiple programs versus one program. It was determined that 111 additional classes are needed to deliver multiple programs. The net result is an additional $5.7 Million per year in teacher salaries. There are a total of 2,512 classes in grades K to 8, so the overall percentage of additional classes is roughly 3% to 4%.

The results of the incremental number of classrooms required are similar to the analysis by the Department for Federal funding through the Official Languages in Education Program managed by Heritage Canada. Approximately 3 years ago, it was determined that 120 extra classes would be required to deliver immersion programs. A total incremental cost of $8.2 Million for immersion and $7.1Million for the core French classes was determined. It was estimated that the Province recovers 25% of incremental costs to enhance French learning and that there are no guarantees in place to ensure long-term stability of these funds.

Both teachers groups reported that an introduction to French language instruction in kindergarten would be beneficial for the students.

Our Conclusions

We found varied and numerous opinions regarding the optimal structure of the FSL programs. We also identified that considerations applied by various groups when assessing FSL structures range across a number of dimensions including developmental, political, social, and fiscal issues. Even within groups, opinions related to the optimal structure of FSL programs vary. DPAC's, Home and School Association, teachers and principals, all reported to some extent that consensus is not achieved even within their own respective groups. In our view, it is highly improbable that the Department could develop and implement a program that would satisfy all individuals and groups associated with or interested in FSL programs. Many groups including comments in the discussion meetings and correspondence generally favour a single entry point for immersion at either grade 3 or 4 or an enhanced or extended core programs for all students. Immersion advocates are most supportive of early immersion in that it delivers the best French proficiency results in a more heterogeneous environment than the intermediate immersion program.

That being said, the Department may be required to respond to a combination of challenges of the current FSL organization, especially as they apply to programs development, entry point, middle school non-immersion conditions, and fiscal considerations. In our view, the best adjustment to the collective pressures of these considerations is to implement the grade 3 / grade 6 immersion entry option as outlined in alternative 1, with the core FSL arrangements as outlined in alternative 2 (compulsory to grade 8 with full year instruction in grades 9 and 10). We recognize there is limited support for many alternatives, including this one. This alternative will ensure an additional two years of educational performance before initial decisions concerning immersion entry will have to be made by students. During this period, educators and parents can assess student FSL immersion performance potential and implement remedial measures as necessary. It is also possible that an additional two years of instruction in their first language will result in increases in performance assessment scores in those areas (namely grade 3 science) where current early entry students now demonstrate lower levels of performance than their non-immersion counterparts. This alternative allows for a second immersion entry point (as does the present structure). It is expected that this alternative could generate cost savings that could then be allocated for assessments such as an early grade diagnostic tool for immersion students. This alternative also allows for increased FSL instruction for those core students who choose to continue with the program into Grades 9 and 10.

We are aware that the implementation of this alternative will meet an amount of resistance from selected groups, especially those who advocate FSL immersion opportunities. It offers initial entry two years later than the current arrangement (grade 3 as opposed to grade 1). At the same time, it could offer the opportunity for more reasoned and informed decisions concerning immersion entry as well as increased time on task for core participants.

We received many comments concerning difficult classroom conditions faced by non-immersion students and teachers. In many cases, these difficulties were attributed to the classroom composition of special needs students. We will address this point in greater detail in issue 6.

Issue 3: "How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?"

Summary of Findings

Formal reviews and Department reliability coefficients suggest that the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam and grade 6 reading and writing test are valid and reliable. In 1998, assessments were undertaken by Crocker[7] on a number of New Brunswick assessments including the Grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam and the Grade 6 French Second Language Proficiency Exam that assesses the student's abilities in reading and demand writing. Crocker suggested, "The best documented assessment is the grade 12 Oral French Proficiency Test." Crocker also reported that the grade 12 French Oral Proficiency Exam Assessment establishes and maintains reliability most effectively out of all the assessment instruments reviewed.

Crocker did raise a concern with the grade 6 reading and writing assessment. The test was originally purchased under agreement from Alberta and is used for the same purposes. There is concern that though the test is intended for French first language individuals, it is being applied in an immersion setting for second language students. A normative adjustment is made, meaning the students can be compared to one another, though the test is intended to be criterion referenced in nature. That is the results are compared against a pre-defined and standard frame of reference.

Given that the results are not reported at a student level and the relative value-for-money effectiveness of purchasing a ready-made test, there is an overall cost effective consideration for using this test in New Brunswick.

The reliability coefficient as noted in report card for the grade 6 assessment is considered to be within an acceptable range.

While formal reviews and measurements indicate overall acceptability, some concerns were raised by respondents including;

- Students are nervous when taking the exam;
- The emphasis placed on one 15 to 30 minute interview; and
- The limited knowledge students have of discussion topics in the interview.

[7] Crocker, B. 1998 Evaluation of New Brunswick Assessment Programs. Atlantic Evaluation and Research Consultants.

Others reported to us that the Oral Proficiency Exam places emphasis in developing oral skills in the classroom and this is a positive aspect of the assessment.

There were some concerns noted by the respondents that indicated the grade 6 exam was developed in another province for native francophones. Other respondents suggested that this was not a weakness of the assessment program as the instrument can be considered to be a valuable systems check for the program at an appropriate level.

Respondents advocated assessment testing FSL capabilities in more grades. The most prominent response concerning assessments was that there should be 'pulse checks' for student FSL oral proficiency in grades 5 and 8, as well as, more comprehensive oral, reading comprehension, and writing tests in grade 12. It was suggested to us that grades 5 and 8 testing could be overseen by the Department and delivered and managed at a classroom level to control cost. We did receive fewer reports that students are tested frequently enough in other subject areas. Accordingly, any additional formal assessments were seen to place incremental stress on the students and teachers. Respondents suggested that limited weight should be placed on these additional assessments, if they are implemented. The suggestion was that any additional tests should be used for diagnostic purposes. That is, any additional testing should be used to assist students to focus on weaker areas and to assist teachers to make appropriate adjustments based on results.

According to respondents, an evaluation of FSL programs at the school level should address several facets of the programs. The most favoured elements to be assessed, as reported to us by the various sources include:

- Teachers' French language proficiency, and to a lesser extent, competencies related to second language pedagogy and subject matter expertise;
- Time on task adherence to Policy 309;
- Adequate resource and methods availability for immersion students;
- Additional testing for student oral, reading, and writing French competencies; and,
- Curriculum adherence and consistency throughout the Province.

Other less frequently suggested focus areas for school level evaluation include:

- Retention rates of students in respective programs;
- Cost per student for resource and methods resources, by program;
- Measurement of the French capabilities relative to other areas in Canada;
- An assessment to determine why parents select one program over another for their children,
- Measurement of cultural offerings;

- French language retention (longitudinal) post graduation;
- Pupil Educator Ratio (PER) monitored and determined what is a reasonable class size based on the skill level and composition of learners in the classroom; and,
- The relative comfort of principals to monitor immersion classrooms.

Multiple levels of accountability exist for results achieved. Delivering educational programs was reported to us to be very much a collaborative effort involving many groups within and across the system. The consensus perspective reported to us suggested that teachers are accountable for meeting the curriculum standards and the Department is accountable to ensure that the suitable standards are in place and resources are available to support the program.

Our Conclusions

In our view, there is sound evidence to conclude that the Department wide assessment program in place (namely the Grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam and the Grade 6 French Second Language Proficiency Exam) is valid and reliable. While there are areas in which these instruments can be considered to be lacking, we consider these to be of limited consequence. Further, we conclude that there is not sufficient reason, including cost effectiveness, to increase the level of system wide proficiency testing.

We also conclude that additional testing aids at the classroom level are warranted. We detected strong support for instructional aids that would allow FSL students and teachers to identify specific weaknesses.

While this evaluation did not examine activities and effectiveness of program monitoring, it is our conclusion that the FSL programs will benefit from undertaking and communicating the outcomes of a comprehensive monitoring process. There is strong support for high levels of program delivery monitoring, especially as it relates to the following features of program delivery:

- Teachers' French language proficiency, and to a lesser extent competencies related to second language pedagogy and subject matter expertise;
- Time on task adherence to Policy 309;
- Adequate resource and methods availability for immersion students; and
- Curriculum adherence and consistency throughout the Province.

(We did not include monitoring for additional testing for student oral, reading and writing French competencies in the above list. While this aspect of the program was among those that respondents mentioned to us, we have dealt with it earlier in this section.)

Monitoring and accountability are, in our view closely related, management conditions. There is sound acceptance throughout the various groups with whom we spoke of the multiple levels of accountability associated with the FSL programs. In our view, the various roles and responsibilities associated with accountability are not sufficiently and clearly documented and approved at the most senior levels of the Department. Given the high, and in our view, sometimes passionate levels of interest that various groups demonstrate in the FSL programs, there is the possibility groups may at times act in a manner which does not properly recognize the mandated or accepted accountabilities of others for the various program elements. In the absence of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for program accountability, it is also possible that individuals may find that they have inadvertently placed themselves in a difficult, if not, in a conflict situation. One example of a situation that describes this possibility is the responsibilities of the SPAC's and the DPAC's for the FSL programs. Another example is the relationship of the FSL Supervisors with the CPF members. We are unsure of the level of direction FSL Supervisors receive from the Department to guide them in their participation with CPF members as resource persons, members or interested parties. Clear detail concerning roles and responsibilities is, in our view, a critical requirement, if these same Supervisors have a responsibility to advise other Department Officials concerning FSL programs policies and practices.

Issue 4: "What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of FSL programs offerings?"

We reported our findings and conclusions concerning selected aspects of alternative assessment procedures in the previous section. Some of our discussion groups were asked to directly address the question of alternative assessment procedures. The following is a summary of these discussions and our additional conclusions to the issue of additional assessment procedures.

Summary of Findings

Almost all respondents suggested that additional assessments are preferable. Few comments referred to the validity and reliability of specific instruments. Current program-wide assessments are in place only in grades 6 and 12. As reported earlier, reports that oral French assessments implemented in grades 5 and 8 are preferable. The most frequent accompanying rationale for suggesting these assessment points to us was that the promotion to the next grade usually involved entry into a new school level. To illustrate, grade 5 students are preparing to enter middle school and grade 8 students are preparing to enter high school.

The Oral Proficiency Exam was reported to us to be expensive to administer due to the one on one interviewing method conducted by independent contract personnel.

Teachers and Department officials occasionally suggested that an assessment to diagnose problem areas in early grades is required. Preferred assessments at this level were those that would diagnose speech, reading, and other learning disabilities. Teachers in one district reported that a significant amount of research to find assessment instruments for these purposes had been undertaken. However, no such test of this nature could be located. The same group further noted that the assessment instruments in French first language classrooms are too advanced for immersion students and do not provide information that sufficiently meet their diagnostic requirements.

Teacher reported that classroom level assessments are often used to evaluate student performance. Several instances where students manage personal portfolios in immersion were reported. Student portfolios were described as a file that includes selected examples of the products immersion students have completed as part of program involvement. For example, this personal portfolio could contain a sample of demand writing for in-class assignments or test scores. The portfolios were perceived to be effective means of demonstrating student performance for student - teacher meetings. Another use of these portfolios is to allow teachers to better understand student competencies at the start of the school year.

While the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam contributes to assessing overall program success, reports we received indicate that it is not helpful for students and teachers to identify and address individual student weaknesses. Nearly all respondents reported that the current formal assessments do not help students and teachers identify weaknesses.

Student grades, student-teacher meetings, and self-diagnosis on the part of the student, and teachers' intuitive judgements were reported to us as assessment tools applied within the program. These tools allow students and teachers to understand weaknesses and where to focus their remediational efforts. Some teachers suggested videotaping as an appropriate method for teachers and students to analyse progress and identify areas of concern. With this method, a student's oral presentation skills early in a grade year and then later in the year are video recorded and compared.

It was reported that teachers occasionally make appropriate adjustments based on the grade 6 French reading and writing exam. Respondents did not describe specific examples of adjustments at the classroom level to us.

Our Conclusions

Implementing more frequent evaluations would increase time and financial requirements for the Department. Time and cost issues were earlier suggested as the primary reasons for discontinuing prior assessments. Specific details regarding the incremental effort required to deliver additional Oral Proficiency Exams in additional grades were not provided to us. It was estimated by a Department official that due to attrition at the high school grades, fewer students are eligible for the exam than earlier grades. If the same process were utilized to deliver the Oral Proficiency Exam, many more students would be eligible and would cost more than double the current allocated budget for this assessment.

In-class and teacher led assessments appear to be acceptable additional assessment methods that can be applied and will allow for cost control in doing so. We received conflicting perspectives as to whether or not the in-class assessments available and currently used provide reasonably sound valid and reliable results, in many instances the reports were provided anecdotally. Thus, we cannot conclude that the additional assessment system in place provides valid and reliable results. We do however conclude that the assessments now in place provide teaching staff and students with information that assists the instructional / learning process.

We again note that FSL teachers have voiced a strong requirement for resource materials that will assist in diagnosing performance and learning difficulties at an individual level.

Issue 5: To what extent are the identified objectives for the French Second Language programs met?

The identified objectives for the French Second Language (FSL) programs are as follows:

- Core program: To achieve degree of proficiency corresponding to **Intermediate Level**
- Early immersion program: To achieve degree of proficiency corresponding to **Advanced Level**
- Intermediate immersion program: To achieve degree of proficiency corresponding to **Intermediate Plus Level**

The definitions of each proficiency level are described in Appendix B.

Summary of Findings

42% of students tested on the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) attained stated objectives in 1999. The following figures represent the five year average for students in each program that reached intended program goals: 25% of core students, 46% of intermediate immersion students, and 36% of early immersion students.

Overall, there is no evidence to suggest that goal attainment is increasing for core and immersion students. In fact, core students reached a level of intermediate 25% of the time in 1999, down from a high of 30% in 1995. The 1999 results for this group are exactly identical to the five- year average for the group.

Similarly, intermediate immersion results indicate a high of 55% goal attainment reached in 1995, whereas results in 1999 were 48% with a five- year average of 46%.

The early immersion students have shown consistent results during this five-year period. In 1999, 38% of students achieved the Advanced level of student proficiency, up from a low of 32% five years ago. Moreover, the 1999 figure had a marginal increase over the five-year average of 36%.

There also has been no discernible increase over the past five years for students oral proficiency at one half level below the intended results. For example, 70% of core students achieved 'Basic Plus' five years ago, and achieved again in 1999. 93% of intermediate immersion students achieved 'Intermediate' in 1999, with a five-year average of 91% at this same level of proficiency. The five-year average for early immersion students achieving 'Intermediate Plus' is 83%; 81% reached this level in 1999.

Time on task (non-compliance to Policy 309) and limited high school French offerings were most frequently reported to us to impact the number of students achieving targeted levels. 'Provincial Status – Implementation and Adherence to Policy 309' (1998) was provided to us by the FSL supervisors. This

document suggests that time on task requirements were being met at the time the report was produced or would have been met September 1998. Furthermore, the 'Provincial Status' document indicated that two districts were identified as suffering 'serious' lack of compliance, and three districts flagged with 'minor' compliance issues. The Department has not issued a similar 'Provincial Status' Report for 2000, and as such, current levels of compliance are not exactly known as of the writing of this report. Aside from time of task, motivation to concentrate on sciences, math, and English at the high school level were also cited as reasons why many students from all programs do not achieve certain goals. Lastly, students in all programs infrequently reported the proficiency of teachers as a reason for low achievement levels.

In spite of the fact that most students do not attain FSL programs goals, some individuals from the Department and outside researchers suggested that students were nonetheless doing well. Many groups reported that the program goals are appropriate, others held that these goals could be adjusted one-half level below current objectives, or at the very least recognized at the lower level. The Department now indicates in the annual report card all levels of results for students.

Only 23% of grade 12 students participated in the OPE in 1998 and 1999. There were 6,883 students enrolled in grade 12 in 1999, of which 1,564 enrolled in grade 12 were tested. In 1998, 1,561 students were tested for the OPE and there were a total of 6,681 students enrolled in grade12. Core enrolment in grade 12 in 1998-1999 was estimated at 5,655, of which 408 participated in the OPE. This indicates a 7% retention rate through grade 12 by core enrolment in FSL programs.

There were 1,997 students enrolled in immersion in 1997-1998 in grade 10. Two years later, in 1999, 1,244 students were enrolled in immersion in grade 12. This indicates that up to 38% of students have either dropped immersion, dropped out of school, or moved out of the Province. Department statistics indicated that approximately 5% of students drop out in grades 10 through 12, and there were no available statistics to indicate how many students moved out of the Province. Though not to the degree of the core program, these figures indicate that significant high school attrition is apparent in immersion.

Our Conclusions

We consider the overall results on the Oral Proficiency Exam (OPE) to be stable, but not necessarily successful. The Department does not have defined thresholds for the OPE results which would determine reasonable results. FSL supervisors, Department officials, CPF members, and some parents and teachers have described attaining the goals of each program similar to achieving 100% on a test. There are not expectations from some that all of the students should reach program goals, nor were opinions offered relative to what the Department should expect in terms of OPE results. In some reported instances, the goals of the program are seen as reasonable, yet challenging; too challenging in others.

There are perceptions from some Department officials and CPF members that when Policy 309 is fully conformed to across the Province, the achievements of the students will increase. It is interesting to note that since 1995 to present, the results on the OPE have not increased. Non-compliance to Policy 309 has decreased, yet the students, on average, have not achieved the intended goals.

There is no Department goal statement regarding FSL retention. Program success is described as achieving the goals as defined in the Oral Proficiency Exam scale, yet in 1998-1999, only 42% of students, comprised of 24% of the grade 12 student population achieved the goals of the program. Stated another way, only 10% of all students reached FSL programs goals in 1999. Earlier in the analysis, it was stated that only 61% of students had a level of proficiency at what is now considered Novice. The Province has made steps to be sure, but further steps are required relative to the entire anglophone population.

Issue 6: What is the impact of current French Second Language programs on the total population of anglophone students in the Province?

This issue was examined from a variety of perspectives and included attempts by our researchers to collect evidence from the respondents to support the perspectives they communicated to us.

In analysing 'impacts' on the total population of anglophone students, we collected perspectives and supporting evidence (as offered) related to the following:

Positive and negative features of the various programs;

- Impacts the programs have on one another;
- Classroom conditions of each program;
- Extent of 'streaming,' if evident, in the system; and
- Reasons for enrolment in immersion programs.

We also reviewed secondary data to aid in analysing prevalent perspectives in the system including:

- Pupil – Educator Ratio (PER) for each program;
- Teaching experience and age of the teacher for each program; and
- Split classroom trends.

Summary of Findings

Several respondent groups, including parents of non-immersion students and teachers, suggested to us that learning in the first language is the most positive aspect of their program. It was stated that overall, it is more important to build core competencies in English than in French. It was also suggested that learning some French in the elementary grades allows students to decide in grade 5 whether entry into the intermediate immersion program is appropriate. Parents of non-immersion students reported to us that the first language-learning environment (English) allows them to be more involved with their children's homework. FSL supervisors suggested that this was a positive aspect of the non-immersion program. In addition to the above positive aspects, non-immersion parents suggested the following positive impacts of the non-immersion program:

- Their children were able to attend a community based school, as opposed to busing them to regional schools;
- A strong curriculum; and
- The provision of some French cultural awareness to students.

FSL supervisors and CPF members perceived that the non-immersion program generally receive more support on the part of the administration and more resources and methods support than does immersion programs. However, no empirical evidence was provided to support this opinion. Immersion teachers, to a lesser extent, suggested that if there were more resources and methods in immersion programs there might be more special needs students in immersion. Some parents supported this perspective. More parents, however, suggested that immersion programs are more challenging, perhaps too challenging, for special needs students, even if appropriate resources and methods were in place. Parents, DPAC chairs, and teachers shared similar positive aspects of the non-immersion program; FSL supervisors and CPF members had different views of this program.

More negative than positive features of the non-immersion program were raised with us. In our discussions, groups were more likely to specify negative rather than positive aspects of the non-immersion program. Also, we noticed that these negative perspectives were more consistent across groups than the positive aspects reported earlier. Most frequently, persons reported to us a view that there are more behavioural and special needs students in non-immersion classrooms, creating a wider variety of learners. Consequently, teachers often teach at a lower level, leaving the more capable students in the non-immersion program unchallenged. There is very limited Departmental data to support or to refute this perspective. On a few occasions, non-immersion program teachers provided local classroom statistics as evidence for their comments.

Report card result trends indicate immersion students significantly outperform non-immersion students in grade 8. Moreover, preliminary data indicates the same trend in grade 11 performance assessments.

In a few instances, we received reports that the severity of the challenges of special needs students is greater in the non-immersion program, though there was no empirical evidence provided to us to support this perspective.

Parents and DPAC chairs frequently reported that there are lower expectations placed on the non-immersion program students. FSL supervisors, non-immersion students and CPF members stated that the students in non-immersion are less interested in, and motivated to learn, French. They suggested that this was most noticeable in the middle and high school levels. The low number of students that remain in core program through grade 12 and take the Oral Proficiency Exam was suggested to us as supporting evidence for this perspective.

Parents sometimes reported concern with the negative stigma attached to the non-immersion program and its participants.

By far, developing highly proficient students in their second official language, and the job opportunities that result, is perceived to be the most positive aspect of immersion programs. The Provincial Assessment results confirm that immersion students have developed French competencies to a greater extent than their core program counterparts.

Parents offered a number of examples of the beneficial impacts of immersion programs. The most frequent examples offered to us included:

- When attending high school, their children have been offered several summer jobs because of their French skills. It should be noted that no evidence other than this one was presented to support the notion that immersion students are presented with better and more job offers, either while enrolled in secondary school or once they have graduated;

- Immersion students receive an enhanced French cultural awareness; and

- Increased confidence on the part of the students and pride in their accomplishments.

In addition, parents, immersion teachers, and FSL supervisors offered reports of better, more motivated students in immersion classrooms. These same groups suggested that immersion parents are more involved in their child's schooling. This is reported to be an important aspect in developing the motivation of students.

Some groups reported that class sizes are smaller in immersion. Overall, Departmental data suggests that there is little difference in class size between the non-immersion and immersion programs. In 1998-1999, the average PER in grades K-8 in immersion was 24.7 versus 25.1 for non-immersion classrooms. Alternatively, the average class sizes for immersion and non-immersion in grades 11 and 12 were 22.35 and 18.67 respectively. There were instances cited by teachers from both programs that larger discrepancies exist in their school. Overall, little difference in PER between the two programs was found in the data provided to us by Departmental officials. However, we were not able to review data at the school level. Therefore, we are not able to determine if specific school locations demonstrate significantly higher PERs for non-immersion classes.

A perceived lack of resources and adequate instructional methods are the most frequently cited negative aspects of immersion programs. This was reported to be a reason why streaming is evident in the system. Even if appropriate resources were in place to support instruction in immersion programs, we can only speculate whether enrolment by special needs students in the program would increase and attrition would decrease. Teachers sometimes stated that it is difficult to determine how to manage challenged

students in their classrooms. Research by Genesee[8] (1992) suggested that learning in a second language does not adversely affect special needs students' performance. Further, Bruck[9] (1985) determined that children who had transferred from immersion to the non-immersion program did not perform at a higher level and that the students problems were not specific to learning in a second language. Suggestions from some groups indicated that the socio-economic status of immersion students is favourable. Research by Genesee[10] (1992) was cited to refute this claim; though the research findings indicate that economically disadvantaged perform equally well - not that there are a proportional number of economically disadvantaged children in immersion programs.

The perception exists that there are not sufficient convenient course offerings in high school for immersion students. It was reported that this negatively impacts the students' ability to develop French skills in high school. Alternatively, a teacher group reported that parents and students are more concerned with science, math, and English at the high school level. As such, the priority of learning French is lost in the later grades.

Multiple groups reported the separation between the programs as a negative aspect of immersion programs. There is very little interaction between the two programs, immersion and non-immersion, according to the respondents. Many frequently stated that immersion might attract more motivated students, most conspicuously in the intermediate program.

One group suggested that the lobbying activities of immersion advocacy groups have a negative impact on the non-immersion program. Some groups also reported that the science and math skills with immersion students are not as strong as they are within non-immersion students. (This was reported as a perception by some and not in fact the case by others.) Results in grades 8 and 11 confirmed that immersion students perform better than non-immersion students in these subject areas.

Other less frequently reported negative aspects of immersion programs include:

- Increased pressure on immersion students to perform a higher level; and
- Immersion is considered a political issue, not about students learning a second language.

[8] Genesee, F. 1992, Second/Foreign Language Immersion and At-risk English Speaking Children. Foreign Language Annals, Vol. 25 number 3
[9] Bruck, M. 1985, Consequences of Transfer out of Early French Immersion. Applied Psycholinguistics 6
[10] Genesee, F. 1992, Second/Foreign Language Immersion and At-risk English Speaking Children. Foreign Language Annals, Vol. 25 number 3

Teacher proficiency in either English, Language, or subject matter expertise was called into question on only a few occasions. As stated previously, we did not find strong evidence to support this perspective. The French proficiency of supply teachers was more frequently cited as a negative aspect of immersion.

Nearly all groups reported that 'streaming' is evident. It was generally accepted that parents are the primary decision-makers for choice of program at grade 1, with teachers having limited influence. The practice of more motivated, and possibly brighter, students entering the intermediate immersion program were a perspective shared by many groups. It was reported that, at times, a shared decision was made for the grade 6 entry point between children, parents, and teachers. Friends of students and administrators can also influence the selection of programs. Some groups held that this practice was evident years ago when immersion was first implemented, while others feel it is more evident now.

We reviewed the above information, as well as other aspects of the information reported earlier in this document, with senior level officials of the Department of Education. In response, they acknowledged that conditions reflective of various aspects of streaming may well exist in selected instances and locations. Concurrently, Department officials indicated to us their desire to have additional detail concerning such instances in order to more completely understand the nature and magnitude of any such conditions. Areas of particular interest to Department officials included the following:

- Instructional aids and methodologies currently being applied in immersion programs could as well be applied to enhance French language instruction in the core program;
- Pupil-Educator Ratio (PER) at the classroom level across the Province, allowing for a comparison of actual PER differences by grade and program at the school level; and
- An indication of the specialist learning/teaching resources available to both immersion and non-immersion programs.

As well, Department officials have indicated that they would benefit from valid and reliable follow - up information concerning the actual instances in which students who completed immersion programs actually secured employment in which the ability to converse in French was a condition of their employment.

Our Conclusions

The perceived conditions associated with the each program, concurrent with and/or as a result of multiple program offerings, are very dissimilar. There are indications that immersion programs are considered by those involved directly and indirectly, to be highly successful. In 1979, only 61% of students[11] were at a level now corresponding to 'Novice' on the Oral Proficiency Exam scale. Now 96% of core students and 100% of immersion students are at a basic level, showing that improvement has occurred over a period of time. In addition, there is support for the belief that these active and highly visible immersion programs have created a positive influence on French learning for all students. A cause for concern though is the fact that only 10% of core students remain in FSL programs through to grade 12.

Non-immersion program is perceived to be much less successful. Those who participate directly in the non-immersion program as well as those who participate directly and indirectly in immersion programs frequently voice this perspective. The heavy and vocal emphasis on immersion programs may well have devalued participation in the core program. It is, in our view, unfortunate that this perspective was offered to us by some non-immersion students and their parents, among others. We are of the belief that this perception is not one that professional educators would want to encourage, even inadvertently.

In our view, the objectives and goals of the immersion programs are clearly defined by the Department. Just as clear to us is the diversity of reasons parents apply when enrolling their child in the programs. We suspect that there may be instances when parents rank these other reasons at a higher priority when they reflect on the desired outcomes associated with their child's participation in an immersion program. The Department can do little to control the priorities parents assign to future outcomes of their child's educational experience. At the same time these priorities could well mould the requests and pressures parents and others make on the educational system.

One frequent perceived benefit of immersion programs related to their positive impact on future employment opportunities. Parents of immersion students frequently offered this same outcome to us as one element of their rationale for enrolling their children in immersion programs. Department officials have indicated their desire to have valid and reliable data concerning the correlation between completion of immersion programs and future employment within a bilingual or French speaking environment. We agree that this information is important. We support Department officials in their assessment of the requirement for more complete information in this area.

[11] Rehorick, S (1993) French Second Language Learning in New Brunswick Schools Paradigms, Challenges and Strategies

In our view, the perception of "streaming" as an outcome of immersion programs is very strong across selected groups. That is, many individuals and groups have expressed to us and have publicly stated that immersion programs negatively affect the non-immersion program in a variety of ways. Most frequently, the negative impacts reported to us included what many consider to be unacceptably, high levels of behavioural problems and the effort teachers were required to dedicate to other challenged students in the non-immersion program. Some believe that this situation is the result of not having adequate resources in place to support disadvantaged students in immersion.

We note that senior level Department officials with whom we spoke expressed the need to gain additional information on the conditions other respondents attributed to streaming. Specifically, the additional information requirements they identified would allow for a more complete understanding of both the magnitude of the outcomes most often cited as evidence of streaming and the instances in which these conditions were most evident. In our view, the information requirements Department officials defined are the appropriate first step in addressing the streaming concerns that were expressed to us.

Whether or not streaming is actually occurring and regardless of its magnitude, we are of the belief that groups adopt strategies and tactics on the basis of this perception. In short, whether or not streaming is actually occurring is, in our view, of less importance over the short to medium term than is the fact that many parents of non-immersion students, non-immersion teachers, DPAC chairs, and members of many other groups truly believe that it is occurring. The outcome of the perception is, in our view, that many act to criticize aspects of FSL programs, sometimes in the absence of sound confirming evidence, as part of a strategy to improve conditions in non-immersion classrooms. The detailed information requirements referred to above could assist to reduce the levels of criticism and dissention that are now focussed on the FSL.

While mentioned above within the context of additional information requirements, we wish to re-emphasize the importance of the Pupil – Educator Ratio (PER). We received many comments concerning difficult classroom conditions faced by non-immersion students and teachers. In many cases, these difficulties were attributed to the classroom composition of special needs students. In our view, an adjustment to the PER in these instances may be appropriate. Normalizing these figures for each program, together with determining the appropriate ratios requires further study on the part of the Department. Other elements of further study related to this issue is the creation of a definition of the types of learning challenges included for setting appropriate special needs students per class size ratios.

It can be argued that participants in and advocates of immersion programs contribute to the atmosphere of conflict that we noticed between the immersion and other programs. For example, we witnessed instances in which officials and advocates of FSL programs spoke negatively or less than respectfully of participants in non-immersion program. We are not confident that comments such as this contribute to harmony between participants and advocates of both programs. Nor are we confident that such instances contribute to setting the stage for addressing any perceived weaknesses FSL programs or various features of the non-immersion program.

This completes our report on the evaluation of the FSL programs. Further detail to the findings outlined in the body of this report can be found in the enclosed appendices.

Appendix A - First Level Field Research Summary

Issue 1: What is the most effective French Second Language program (FSL) organization that can be used to achieve the goals for FSL instruction in New Brunswick?

Research question 1.1:

What are the perceived two or three major strengths of the current structure for each program element? The elements include entry point, time on task, teacher proficiency, and student critical mass.

By far, the responses from all sources identified the entry point element of FSL programs as its major strength. The prevailing perception offered focussed on the positive aspects of grade 1 entry. All respondent groups suggested that entry to a FSL program at the earliest possible grade level was considered to be beneficial to learning a second language. Some respondents referenced supporting information beyond an anecdotal level.

The optional later entry feature of the FSL program was mentioned as a positive feature of FSL programs in noticeably fewer instances.

Time on task was regarded to be a strength of FSL programs when respondents considered the immersion programs. Students, parents, teacher groups, and DPAC chairs referred positively to this feature of immersion programs. Each group related this element to program success. Most respondent groups reported time on task to be acceptable for the core program, although in reporting this perspective, these same groups did not consistently indicate that time on task was a major strength of FSL programs. While the CPF members suggested that time on task for the core program was insufficient and should be increased, FSL supervisors reported that the program objectives would be met if the time on task as specified in Policy 309 was followed.

Teacher proficiency was rated as a strength of FSL programs only periodically by student, parent, and DPAC groups. In most instances, when parents and students referenced teacher proficiency, the comments were positive. We received comments from FSL supervisors suggesting that the Policy 309 item relating to teacher proficiency was a strength of the program, both at the immersion and core levels.

Student critical mass was cited as a strength of the program in only very few instances.

Research Question 1.2:

What are the perceived weaknesses of the current program in each program element?

The two most identifiable weaknesses from all sources centred around the time on task element of the core program and the selective nature of the intermediate immersion entry point. There is a perception that many parents feel that early years are better spent developing English proficiency, though this was not evident from the stakeholders surveyed.

There were evident weaknesses in the core program in terms of time on task at various levels. Most core students would prefer to have more time spent at the elementary level either learning French language arts programs or another subject such as phys-ed in French and greater flexibility in high school to pursue French studies if interested. The overall theme from the core students is that the time allocated for learning French should have a higher percentage of oral practice. It was indicated that weak French teachers are the exception rather than the norm and that native French speaking teachers are considered to be stronger teachers.

There were differing perspectives reported from the early and intermediate immersion students. There were no weaknesses noted by the early immersion students to begin immersion in grade one, whereas the intermediate immersion students would prefer to begin earlier together with some English grounding. There were indications that not enough time on task spent in high school learning in French and that the student's French proficiency may actually decrease after grade 9. Consistently, the students indicated that there were no weaknesses with their teacher's proficiency, though there were a few exceptions in the lack of consistency and relative expectations from the teachers.

There were indications from the DPAC chairs of severe discrepancies regarding entry points throughout and within the districts. These viewpoints ranged from the current entry points have absolutely no weaknesses to creating severe challenges in the non-immersion program and that immersion programs are not the panacea that many parents perceived it to be. At a two to one ratio, the DPAC chairs would prefer there to be significant changes to the entry points. Again, in terms of time on task, there were broad viewpoints provided, with the majority emphasising that the non-immersion program could afford more time allowance in French learning. Policy 309 adherence and the challenges of delivering effective French programs in rural areas were also noted as weaknesses by several DPAC's. There were indications that French language proficiency takes a higher priority than subject matter expertise in hiring immersion

teachers and the questionable English proficiency of some immersion teachers was noted as a weakness. There were indications that class sizes are unacceptable in all programs. More split classes are a result of having three immersion programs for a limited number of students.

The outside experts reported that the primary weakness of the current entry point is focussed on the later entry point, where the later the entry point the greater probability of selection within the immersion programs. It was indicated that there is not enough time on task in high school learning French in immersion programs. In terms of student critical mass, it is sometimes challenging in rural areas to deliver multiple immersion programs.

Research Question 1.3:

What are the three major ways that the Immersion programs positively affect the Non-immersion program?

All groups were able to suggest beneficial outcomes to the non-immersion program and school environment because of the presence of immersion programs within a school environment. Most often, and again from all groups, the benefit suggested to us was directly related to an improved learning environment for non-immersion students. The examples described to us under this category involved the direct effect of more opportunities to speak French when non-immersion and immersion students interacted outside of their classrooms, as well as indirect effects such as:

- Improvements to the Buddy Reading System; and
- More and diversified learning/instructional resources on site.

Less frequently cited to us were:

- Benefits related to offering more educational choices to non-immersion students.
- Improving the motivation of nore students to learn the French language; and
- Enhancing multicultural acceptance among anglophone students.

Interestingly, FSL supervisors, CPF members, and a second language researcher primarily suggested these benefits. The student, teacher, and DPAC chairs with whom we spoke did not offer suggested benefits such as the above to us.

Just as interestingly, members of the non-immersion student group, the non-immersion teacher group and DPAC chairs regularly reported to us their perception that there were no positive impacts of the non-immersion program that could be attributed to immersion programs.

Research question 1.4:

What are the three major ways that the Immersion programs negatively affect the Non-immersion program?

The non-immersion and immersion student groups, non-immersion teachers, DPAC representatives and to some extent, the external expert opinion, reported similar themes throughout the focus sessions. The prevailing perception from these groups suggested that there were more motivated students in the immersion programs with fewer behaviour problems, often defined as streaming by the groups. It was stated that there is an element of segregation, and limited interaction between the programs and this is not considered positive for either program with 'labels' placed on a child based on program of enrolment by students, teachers and parents. Less frequently, the same groups reported that:

- There are more supportive parents in Immersion,
- Fewer positive role models in a Non-immersion classroom,
- Less challenging environment in the Non-immersion program,
- Perception that the more advantaged children was enrolled in immersion.

The students reported the most varied negative aspects, though in nearly one half of the non-immersion student groups, was that immersion programs do not negatively affect the non-immersion program. On the other hand, other unique student perspectives included the quality of French spoken by the students is not as sound in the non-immersion program, and immersion students have more field trips than their peers in non-immersion program.

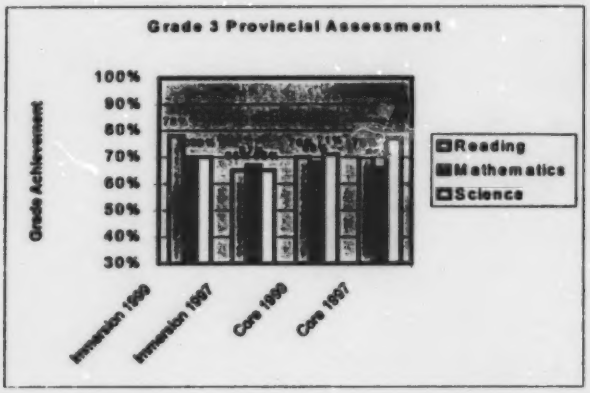
By far, the majority of support for the perspectives offered to us was primarily anecdotal. We offered the CPF members and FSL supervisors the opportunity to address this particular research question. In their responses, they did not identify any negative impacts on the non-immersion program because of immersion. Also, their responses to us do not indicate or clearly specify that there are no negative impacts on the non-immersion program because of immersion programs.

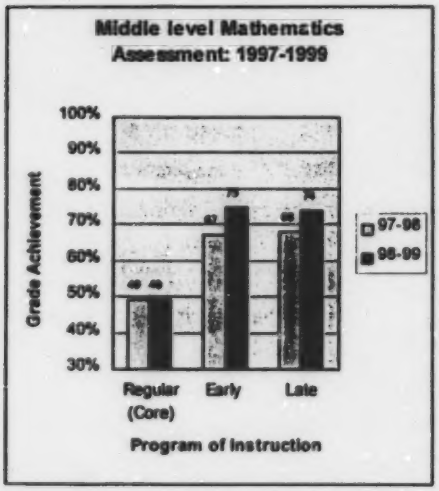
The informed perspectives from all groups were primarily based on experience in the classroom, or through discussions with others involved in the school system. There was limited demonstrated proof beyond the anecdotal evidence reported in all instances.

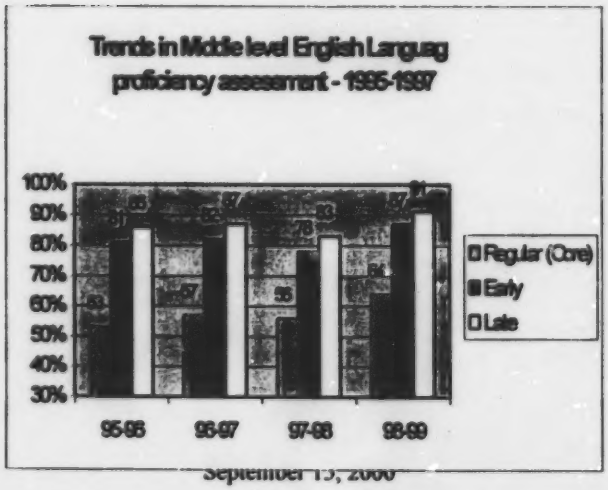
Research Question 1.5

How do Immersion students perform relative to Non-immersion students in Provincial examinations?

Trends in Middle level English Language proficiency assessment – New Brunswick 1995-1999



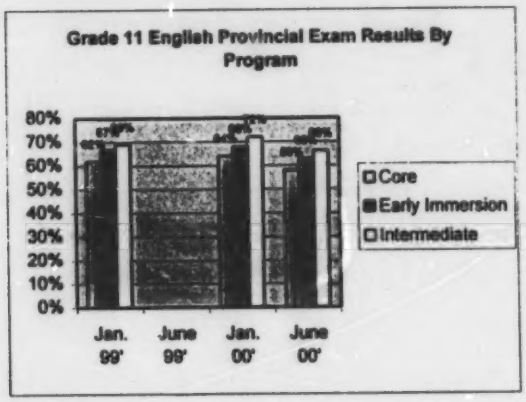


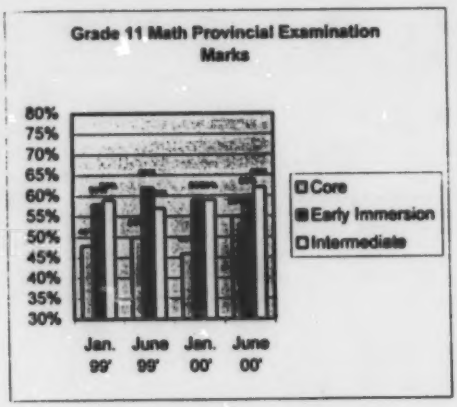


Trends were analysed primarily from Report Card data from 1995 to 1999 for middle level Provincial Assessments. These results are widely distributed and are posted on the New Brunswick Department of Education website. Year over year results of the English language proficiency exam indicate that the intermediate immersion students outperform the early immersion students marginally in English, are essentially even in mathematics and both immersion programs outperform the regular program students in both English and mathematics by a significant margin.

The Department of Education also performs an annual assessment of grade three students in reading, science and mathematics. We have collected data for 1997 and 1999. The differences between the immersion and non-immersion program are less obvious. The immersion students performed at an acceptable or better rating at a higher level in science and math, though the results are the opposite in science where the non-immersion students outperformed the immersion students. Secondary research has suggested that English skills may lag in the early grades of immersion, though the New Brunswick results show that there was a significant 14% gap in demand writing where the Immersion students outperformed the regular students (Report Card 99').

Report Card 99'





A Provincial Examination is also performed in grade 11 for mathematics and English. Beginning in 1999, the Department has begun to ask students "how many years of immersion have you been enrolled in?" This has allowed the Department to disseminate data and has allowed us to review students who are determined to be in each program based on the number of years listed in French immersion. Our analysis allows us to effectively group 75% to 84% of the students in a program. The results above indicate that the intermediate immersion students outperform the early immersion students marginally in English and the non-immersion

students moderately. The math results are more severe with the immersion programs performing at approximately the same level and the non-immersion students lagging behind by up to 14%.

Research Question 1.6

What percentage of students takes the Grade 12 oral exam? From the core program? From each of the immersion programs?

It has been reported by department officials that 99% of students in all programs take the OPE in grade12 that are eligible to do so. There were a total of 6,883 students enrolled in grade 12 in New Brunswick last year, of which 1,564 were tested (22.7%) including 311 Core students, 459 Late immersion, 359 early immersion, 150 Middle immersion, 53 Partial immersion and 101 extended core students.

Research Question 1.7

At a national level, what testing data is available (Could national test scores be broken out by immersion/non-immersion program?)

The Students Achievement Indicators Program (SAIP) has been administered to 13 and 16 year olds in Canada to test reading and writing, science and mathematics capabilities. Overall, students in New Brunswick performed equally as well as their Canadian counterparts in reading and writing, and science. Scores indicated that New Brunswick anglophone students performed around the National average, where differences in scores fall within an acceptable sampling error range. There is no data to determine whether students are in an immersion program or a regular program. It was noted in the 1999 SAIP report that New Brunswick has high rates of student retention (low drop out rates) and integration of special needs students.

Research Question 1.8

Are there university statistics that would disseminate follow up student overall performance relative to Non-immersion/ Immersion students?

Could not be determined from NB based universities.

Research Question 1.9

Rank the most important features of the program from most important to least important relative to contributing to the success of the students in meeting the objectives / Goals of the FSL programs:

- **Entry Point,**
- **Time on Task**
- **Teacher proficiency**
- **Student critical mass**

Responses were sought from a more limited perspective to rank the four features of the program. The groups ranked student critical mass last in both instances. One group of outside researchers noted that all elements are critical and interrelated. The FSL supervisors ranked entry point and time on task as tied for the most important feature of the program followed by teacher proficiency.

Research Question 1.10

Are the goals as defined in Policy 309 understood by the Parents?
four point scale 1 – totally understand, 2 – somewhat understand, 3 – very limited understanding, 4 – totally misunderstood

Overwhelmingly, the parents of non-immersion students have a very limited understanding of the goals of Policy 309 with almost 90% of the parents selecting this viewpoint. The responses from parents of immersion students were more evenly disbursed through the symantic differential scale with approximately 45% of respondents totally understanding the goals of Policy 309, 21% somewhat understanding the goals, 31% having a limited understanding and 3% totally misunderstand the goals of the program.

Common throughout both sets of parents is the perspective that most parents have only a limited or no understanding of the goals. It was reported somewhat less frequently that by both parent groups that they may have an understanding of the goals but do not know these goals specifically from 'Policy 309.'

Only reported once by an immersion parent group was the perspective that immersion parents are perceived to have a greater awareness and understanding of Policy 309.

Research Question 1.11

Are the goals as defined in Policy 309 accepted by the Parents?

Four point scale 1 – totally accept, 2 – somewhat accept, 3 – somewhat do not accept, 4 – totally do not accept

The group responses ranged from 'totally agree' to 'totally do not agree' with the goals of Policy 309 and there were some common themes between the non-immersion and immersion parent groups, though there were more contrasts.

By far, the responses from the immersion parents were favourable of the program goals. Every parent of immersion students either 'totally' or 'somewhat agreed' with the goal statement for the early immersion program. No immersion parent 'totally disagreed' with the program goal statements and the few responses that 'somewhat disagreed' with the statements made reference to the non-immersion or the intermediate immersion program only.

These results are in contrast to the parents of non-immersion students who were widely disbursed throughout the scale. The number of parents of non-immersion children who 'totally agreed', 'somewhat agreed' or 'somewhat disagreed' was essentially the same. There were slightly fewer parents of non-immersion students (just under 20% of respondents) that totally disagreed with the program goals.

All groups stated non-immersion program should be enhanced and that there is lacking motivation to succeed in this program. Similarly, both groups reported that the goals of Policy 309 are not well known enough by the parents. In fewer instances, the immersion parents commented that although the goals are acceptable, the probability of students attaining the goals is low due to the lack of time on task adherence and a 'weak' program. In only one instance, immersion parents stated that there is a pass/fail perception of the Oral Proficiency Exam and this sends the wrong message to parents.

Research Question 1.12

What adjustments, if any, in the program goal statement would better reflect the expectations of your group as a stakeholder or interest group?
Core goal: to achieve degree of proficiency corresponding to: *Intermediate Level*
Early Immersion goal: To achieve degree of proficiency corresponding to: *Advanced Level*
Intermediate Immersion goal: To achieve degree of proficiency corresponding to: *Intermediate Plus Level*

Nearly all of the groups stated that the goals of the program are acceptable. It was suggested by more than one group that the time on task learning in French is lacking and this presents challenges to achieving the

goals of the program. Individuals from more than one group feel that one goal statement is necessary for all students' French proficiency with one program to address this goal. A DPAC member presented a specific adjustment where all students will strive to attain a level of French proficiency equal to 'Intermediate Plus' on the Oral Proficiency Exam scale. An outside researcher believes that an adjustment of one-half of a level downward would be acceptable. FSL supervisors believe the goals should remain the same, though students should be recognized one-half of a level below their intended goal. More than one group noted that there is a parental perception that parents expect children to be fluently bi-lingual by the end of grade 12 in the immersion programs to which in reality is not the goal of Policy 309.

Although many groups agreed with the goals, the individual respondent groups each had their own concerns relative to the goal statements and the following points provided were not reported by more than one group. For example:

- There are concerns that there are inconsistencies in delivering the core program;
- Reading and writing should be added to the French Proficiency examinations at the end of grade12;
- More assessments are required at the grade 5,8,12 levels;
- There are now fewer French excursions together with some districts not fully adhering to the time requirements outlined in Policy 309 and this has an impact on the student's French proficiency; and
- The idea of attempting to 'transplant' a culture into schools versus true Immersion where the student re-locates to an area where there is a high concentration of French was raised as a concern.

Six distinct groups replied to this question.

Research Question 1.16

What are your 2 or 3 major expectations of the Core Program?

Non-immersion parents and students were asked their expectations of the non-immersion program. The most prevalent response given by both groups is that the students develop basic and essential French skills with a focus on an oral competency. Both groups, though fewer responses, also reported an expectation that the student will:

- Be 'functionally bilingual' meaning greater proficiency than basic and essential skills as noted above,
- Achieve a level of 'Intermediate' on the Oral Proficiency Exam and,
- Ensure that French is accommodated in high school with no schedule conflicts against compulsory subjects.

In many instances, though by only the parent group, an expectation was that programs are delivered consistently across the Province. Expectations that were less often reported and only by the parent group include:

- That a negative stigma is not attached to the non-immersion program;
- The students develop the necessary French skills to continue French studies in university;
- That students develop the necessary French skills in elementary school to enter into the intermediate immersion and be comfortable with the program;
- More integration between the non-immersion and immersion programs; and
- Available resources in the schools to help struggling students.

Research Question 1.17

What are your 2 or 3 major expectations of the immersion program?

Immersion students and parents of immersion students were asked their expectations of the immersion program. The responses that were consistent across the groups were also the most popular within each group. The widely held expectations of the parents and students include that there are enhanced job opportunities with an increased level of French proficiency, an added positive cultural French perspective afforded to the immersion students and a relatively high degree of bilingualism is attained. Specifically, some members of both groups expect that the students will attain the level of proficiency on the Oral Proficiency Exam expected relative to the program of enrolment. To a lesser degree, though still prevalent in both sets of stakeholder perspective was the expectation that the students will develop the confidence to use French outside the classroom and that the immersion students receive the same level of instruction as those residing in the non-immersion program.

The parent groups had more widely held expectations than the students had. The parents are more concerned with:

- Policy 309 adherence;
- Adequate resource and methods support in place for Immersion kids with learning difficulties;
- The development of French language learning is not at the sacrifice of their English language development; and
- Opportunities are provided and encouraged by the school for the students to use French outside the classroom.

The students' most prevalent expectations outside the common areas are that they have the ability to converse effectively with both native French and English speakers.

Research Question 1.18

What levels of knowledge of French language are you expecting your children to achieve in the core program for the following French language skills?

- **Writing**
- **Reading**
- **Speaking**

Expectations reported for writing are that the student has 'basic functionality. It is expected that the students will be able to read instructions and have a grade 4 comprehension in French. The parents expect that the students will have 'modest confidence' to use the French language with the ability to express basic thoughts clearly.

Only non-immersion parents were asked this research question. Generally, the non-immersion parents place more emphasis on oral proficiency followed by reading and then writing skills. There were some differences in reading expectations between groups. For example, it was reported to us by one group that the students develop to a grade 4 level for reading comprehension by the end of grade 12. Alternatively, another group stated that the students have the reading skills relative to approximately two grades below their current level.

Research Question 1.19

What levels of knowledge of French language are you expecting your children to achieve in the Immersion program for the following French language skills?

- **Writing**
- **Reading**
- **Speaking**

Only two groups responded to this question, with both groups having relatively high expectations of the program. One group expects that their children 'know' French and English equally well by the end of grade 12 and the other expects a 'very high level' in the three elements of language learning listed.

Issue 2: "What viable alternatives are there to the current programs in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?"

"Viable alternatives" are defined as:

- Reasonable evidence to suggest that student proficiency will not be negatively impacted by an adjustment, if any, to the program;
- The alternatives can be implemented within the current/projected funding levels; and
- Achieve the same program goals but reduce the internal pressure points on various stakeholders

The two alternatives described below are a list of alternatives that fit the 'viable' definition as stated above and were provided from various stakeholders. The focus session task was to match the alternatives against an assessment sheet criterion and determine the ideal options.

Alternative #1:

Overall program structure: non-immersion program, grades 3 and 6 immersion entry points.

Time on task would be similar to the current early immersion program. In grades 3 to 5, 80% of the classroom focus in French. (Language arts would be maintained in English)

Teacher proficiency guidelines would remain the same for the immersion programs.

Critical mass: The Grade 6 entry point would remain in place to allow for rural jurisdictions that do not have enough population to warrant the grade 3 entry point for immersion. Middle level schools in rural areas are generally larger in size and typically have the critical mass to deliver immersion programs.

Alternative #2

I. Kindergarten entry point, grade 6 entry point program, 'non-immersion' program

Kindergarten entry point

Time on task:

1-2 90%

3-5 80% Begin English language arts in grade 3, not grade 4*

6-8 70%

9-10 50%

11-12 keep optional (offer minimum of 25%)*

Grade 6 entry – structure remains the same

* Denotes a change from the current program

Grade 6 entry point program

Remain the same

'Non-immersion' Program

Kindergarten entry and is compulsory through grade 8.

Grade 9 and 10 are optional and are a full year, not semestered.

Assessment criterion:

1. What evidence can you provide to suggest student proficiency will/will not be negatively impacted in comparison to what now exists?

2. What evidence can you provide to suggest how the alternative will impact immersion student proficiency in science and math?

3. For Non-immersion Program: What evidence can you provide to suggest that the alternative will enhance the learning environment relative to the regular (non-immersion) program that students and teachers currently experience?

4. What evidence can you provide to suggest that this alternative will not negatively impact the overall cost of delivery?

Summary for issue 2:

Two alternatives were provided to non-immersion and immersion programs teachers. These alternatives are based on discussions with other stakeholder groups. The alternatives were matched against assessment criterion that was developed to provide structure to the discussions and ensure that key aspects of program alternatives are discussed.

Alternative 1:

The single largest difference from the current program is shifting the early immersion entry point to grade three. Generally, the immersion teachers reported that the first alternative would have a significant impact

on the early immersion student's French proficiency and reading and comprehension is being developed in grades 1 through 3. There was only one set of immersion teachers that stated there is evidence to support their position but did not specifically provide the details on the research. The non-immersion program teachers held that by the end of grade 12, there would be marginal or no affect on the early immersion student's French proficiency. There was one instance of immersion teachers stating that French proficiency would decrease only somewhat and would primarily affect the child's French accent.

The first alternative and its impact on the student's math and science skills were then discussed. The immersion teachers were equally split between this alternative having no impact and a negative impact whereas the non-immersion program teachers almost exclusively stated that it would have no impact. More immersion programs teachers described this alternative having a negative impact on the science and math skills due to not sufficiently developing the necessary French skills in grade 3 to begin learning these subjects in French. Fewer immersion teachers stated that changing the program to this structure would have a positive affect by developing a foundation in English for science and math and that the students take science and math in French in high school. One group of non-immersion program teachers noted that it would be difficult to assess this alternative on science and math, though believe that most parents want their children taught these subjects in English in high school.

The first alternative and discussions regarding whether this model would enhance the learning environment relative to the non-immersion program that the teachers and students currently experience (assessment criteria 3). The teachers from the two programs had similar responses. An equal number of immersion teacher groups responded that there would little or no alleviation on the pressure points that the non-immersion program students and teachers currently experience and that it would be better socially to have the children together for the early years. It was noted that streaming is not as big a factor as it once was. Similarly, the non-immersion teachers most popular responses were nearly the same as the immersion teachers though there was one more group to respond that it would be better socially for the children in grades 1 and 2. Only the non-immersion teachers reported that streaming might in fact be more severe with a grade 3 entry point though the same groups reported that Alternative one would provide greater stability in the early grades.

The impact on the overall cost of delivery was discussed regarding the alternatives. For Alternative 1, neither the immersion or non-immersion teachers achieved consensus on whether the alternative would negatively or positively impact the overall cost of delivery. There were an equal number of non-immersion teachers that believed that the program would be less expensive to administer as there were that held the program alternative would be more expensive. There was one fewer group of immersion teachers that reported the alternative would be less expensive than the current model as there were groups that reported it would be more expensive overall and little if no impact.

The most popular rationale for stating that the alternative would be less expensive overall is that there is less cost of delivering fewer years of immersion. This is because it costs more in terms of resources and teachers to deliver multiple programs. Re-training, resources and materials were the most popular reasons for suggesting that the alternative would be more expensive to administer.

Alternative 2:

There were broad and varying viewpoints from the immersion and non-immersion teachers regarding alternative two. Within both groups, there were perspectives that the alternative was positive and negative overall. Both groups reported, with the immersion teachers most frequently responding that Kindergarten immersion would have a negative overall affect because it is too early for the students, the parents may feel more uncomfortable with the decision and may not be good socially for the children. Both groups responded that there should be an introduction to French language arts in Kindergarten for all students, not French immersion. To a greater extent, the non-immersion teachers suggested that French proficiency levels would remain unchanged or have only a minimal positive effect. The non-immersion and immersion teachers both reported to a lesser degree that French proficiency for all programs would increase with this alternative. For non-immersion students, the most frequent response from non-immersion teachers was that more would decide to discontinue French studies after grade 8, so that overall, the proficiency levels would decrease. On the other hand, the immersion teachers responded that Core proficiency levels would increase on the Oral Proficiency Exam because only interested students would decide after grade 8 to continue French studies.

Overwhelmingly, both teacher groups believe that alternative two would have a minimal or no affect on the student's capabilities in science and math. Only one non-immersion teacher group reported that there would be a minimal negative affect due to fewer years of English for the early immersion students. One immersion teacher group was concerned with time on task increases in high school due to the concern that more immersion students would decide to discontinue their French immersion studies due to priorities in other subjects.

The most frequent response regarding alternative 2 affects to relieve the pressure points non-immersion students and teachers currently experience is that is would have minimal or no affect. Both groups also reported, to a lesser extent, the following:

- This alternative would stream the students in kindergarten instead of grade 1; and
- Would not enhance the learning environment for the non-immersion students in high school and that French should be mandatory through high school.

Alternatively, the same number of Immersion groups and no non-immersion groups reported that high school French for the core students would be enhanced.

To a lesser degree non-immersion teachers responded that the kindergarten entry point for non-immersion students would enhance their positive perception of the French culture, though the same number of non-immersion teachers suggested that fewer students may enrol in early immersion and it may create higher levels of attrition.

All groups in both teacher groups reported that this alternative would have a negative impact on program delivery costs through additional set-up costs, teacher displacement in Kindergarten, and additional teachers required to deliver multiple programs. One immersion teacher groups provided an example where if there are 100 students in a kindergarten class, there would be four teachers managing 25 students. With immersion in kindergarten, and there is a 40/60 split between immersion and non-immersion classrooms, then five teachers are required to teach classrooms comprised of 20 students each.

Other information was collected from general comments in discussion meetings outside the research questions asked, as well as written responses from many groups and individuals. The summary of these perspectives is now summarized.

FSL supervisors, immersion teachers and Canadian Parents for French believe generally believe that Policy 309 should take its course and be analysed in 2006, when the first class of students that entered in 1994, will graduate.

Several options were offered to us, some of which were very detailed, others more high level. The most frequent alternatives are now described:

- The immersion programs remain in place, with an enhancement of the core program with more time on task learning French;
- Grade 4 entry point for immersion and an enhanced core program;
- An enhanced core program for all students; and
- Several groups reported that in immersion programs, science and math should be taught in English. It was stated that this would be better for the immersion students in these areas and allow for more integration amongst the various programs.

Regional differences were also noted on occasion where in areas where populations of francophones and anglophones are similar, primarily in the northern areas of the Province. In these areas, some individuals reported that socially, it is more important for the anglophone students to learn French due to the high level of native francophone speakers.

It was reported on more than one occasion that in classrooms where there is a higher than average percentage of special needs students, that the PER ratio should be lowered.

The Department of Education provided some greater detail in terms of costs of delivery. An analysis was conducted by the Department for this Evaluation to determine the incremental number of classrooms required to deliver the multiple programs. It was determined that 111 additional classes are needed to deliver multiple programs. The estimated costs for teachers assumes an average annual salary of $50,000 plus an average of 10 to 12 days paid leave per year at $117. The net result is an additional $5.7 M per year in teacher salaries. There are a total of 2,512 classes in grades K to 8, so the overall percentage roughly 3-4%, but is considerable from a financial perspective nonetheless. These results are similar to the analysis by the Department for Federal funding through the Official Languages in Education Program managed by Heritage Canada. Approximately 3 years ago, it was determined that 120 extra classes are required and a total incremental cost of $8.2M and that FSL programs for core add $7.1M in costs. It was estimated that the Province recovers 25% and that there are no guarantees in place to ensure long-term stability of these funds.

Issue 3: "How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?"

Research Question 3.1

What documentation exists on the validity & reliability of current assessment instruments in use?

The reliability coefficients for the grade 6 FSL reading proficiency assessment (May 99') is 0.8510 as detailed in the Department's annual Report Card 99'. The report card states and we agree that though there is not absolute standard from which to measure reliability coefficients against, a test measuring 0.7 to 0.8 is acceptable.

Though infrequently, general comments made by a wide variety of stakeholders questioned the validity of the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam. Home and School Association and a number of parents questioned that amount of weight placed on a 15 to 30 minute interview. Some students find that they are not prepared for the exam due to a lack of time on task learning French in grades 11 and 12. Students infrequently suggested that they are nervous talking with a stranger and the conversation being tape-recorded. As well, students noted on occasion that the subjects discussed during the interview are not areas well known and, as such, this aspect of the exam should be modified.

Research Question 3.2

What information does the Crocker report provide on the validity & reliability of the assessment instruments currently in place?

Dr, Bob Crocker of Atlantic Evaluation and Research Consultants performed a review of New Brunswick Assessment Programs in September 1998. A component of this review were the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam and the grade 6 French Second Language Proficiency Exam that assesses the student's abilities in reading and demand writing.

Dr Crocker reported on the validity of various New Brunswick assessment instruments stated that "the best documented assessment is the grade 12 Oral French Proficiency Test." It is further noted that the grade 12 French Oral Proficiency Exam is well suited for New Brunswick in their concern in "translating official into practical bilingualism".

Crocker also reported that the grade 12 French Oral Proficiency Exam Assessment establishes and maintains reliability most effectively out of all the assessment instruments reviewed.

The grade 6 reading and writing assessment for students in the grades 1 and 4 entry points enrolled in the French immersion programs. The test was originally purchased under agreement from Alberta and is used for the same purposes in that province. There is concern that though the test is intended for French first language individuals, it is being utilised in an immersion setting for second language students. A normative adjustment meaning the students can be compared to one another, though the test is intended to be criterion referenced in nature, that is the results are compared against a pre-defined and standard frame of reference.

Given that the results are not reported at a student level and the relative value for money effectiveness of purchasing a ready-made test, the overall effectiveness of the test may be considered sufficient.

Research Question 3.3

What assessments are completed at the school & district levels relative to student evaluation, student progress and FSL programs evaluation at the school or district level?

The grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam Assessment, and the grade 6 reading and writing assessment are administered provincially by the Department of Education. The Provincial assessments at most grade levels report the results by program which helps to understand the programs relative success in areas other that French Second Language learning.

A FSL writing assessment was piloted in 1995. A reading assessment was also piloted during the same period to students; however, the Department after one session discontinued it. The FSL supervisors reported that these exams are still administered in limited districts. The FSL supervisors also reported that some districts have in place a reading assessment in the early grades to flag students with reading difficulties.

Research Question 3.4

How should students be evaluated?

The most widely held viewpoint by the respondents is that the students should be evaluated in grades 5 and 8 for oral French proficiencies and in grade 12 for oral, reading, and writing. Teachers, students, and Department officials shared this viewpoint. One Department official noted that the grade 3 assessment provides for a sound program review.

Immersion teachers suggested that at a classroom level, videotaping is sometimes used and this is seen as an effective way for students and teachers to monitor progress. A short video is taped with the student conversing in French at the beginning of a semester and again towards the end to highlight the development of the student throughout the school term.

Teachers described a personal student portfolio as an effective way for students to illustrate progress throughout the school year and from grade to grade. The portfolio was defined as a personal journal that a student manages and contains samples of their schoolwork. The portfolio is used for teacher-parent meetings and for new teachers to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of a student.

The FSL Teacher Education Centre at the University of New Brunswick developed the Maritime Oral Communication Assessment Portfolio (MOCAP). This exam was piloted at one point and then discontinued. Some respondents described MOCAP as an effective way to assess oral competencies at a classroom level and in a group environment for the students. It is not fully known why the Department discontinued this assessment.

One group of immersion students noted in their general comments on the program that a French writing progress check in middle school would be beneficial.

Research Question 3.5

How should student progress be reported?

At was stated by Department officials that the intent of the grade 6 assessments is to provide teachers and schools with a feedback mechanism to analyse where to improve and focus their efforts. It is preferable by this group to keep the current methods of reporting at the school and district levels. Outside experts also noted that it is not always beneficial to report to parents and students and publicize results depending on what is being measured.

Immersion teachers reported that there should be more frequent progress reports for oral proficiency, with one group reporting that grades 3,5,8,10 and 12 should all be measured, mostly at the classroom level to manage budgetary concerns. The immersion teachers reported that criterion references should be developed for the age-appropriateness of the student.

The FSL supervisors suggested that the in the Department's Annual Report Card, the results of the Oral Proficiency Exam are published with the scores by level from Novice to Superior for each program. 'Basic or Higher' to 'Advanced or higher' was the presentation method in the 99' Report Card.

Research Question 3.6

What are the 5 key questions that an evaluation of the FSL programs at the school level should address?

Department officials, outside experts, parents of non-immersion and immersion students, immersion programs teachers and FSL supervisors were asked the above research question. Teacher proficiency was the most frequent broadly based response by the respondents. Outside informants added that in addition to language proficiency requirements, knowledge of second language pedagogy and subject matter expertise should also be evaluated. FSL supervisors held that adequate professional development is allocated for FSL teachers.

Time on task adherence to policies was also frequently reported by all of the groups as an important aspect of FSL programs evaluation. Some non-immersion parents also questioned whether more time on task learning in French is required in the core program.

Nearly all groups recommended that adequate resources and methods are available for students. Immersion parents more frequently stated that this should be analysed specifically for the immersion programs and in one instance the parents suggested that the cost per student for these resources be evaluated. FSL supervisors stated that the resources available for the immersion programs are on par with that in the non-immersion program.

Immersion teachers and parents most frequently stated that more testing of student proficiency for oral, written, and reading competencies of the students should be implemented and evaluated.

Only non-immersion parents suggested that an evaluation of why parents select a certain program for their children and that a PER ratio assessment based on the skill level and classroom composition should be undertaken.

Immersion parents quite often stated that a measurement of the French proficiency of New Brunswick students relative to national standards and the amount of cultural offerings be analysed. Cultural offerings were described as interactions with native francophones such as field trip and assemblies with the francophone students. Infrequently, only immersion parents reported to us that French language retention should be evaluated in the form of a longitudinal study.

Expert opinion respondents stated that retention rates should be evaluated and that mechanisms are put in place to ensure that if a transfer of a student from immersion programs is absolutely necessary it is completed efficiently and appropriately. As well, the same respondent stated that the relative comfort of principals supervising immersion classrooms be monitored.

Immersion parents often, and immersion teachers less so, stated that curriculum consistency and adherence is evaluated throughout the Province.

Research Question 3.7

How often should students be evaluated?

FSL supervisors and a Department official suggested that grades 8 and 12 were appropriate points to evaluate oral, reading, and writing skills. Outside experts, and one other Department official held that students should be assessed in the same areas in grade 5 as well. Teachers suggested grades 4,8,10 and 12 as appropriate points for an evaluation of French oral skills of the students. Reference as well other responses in research question 3.4.

Research Question 3.8

To whom should progress be reported and for what purpose?

Department officials, FSL supervisors, immersion teachers, and parents of both immersion and non-immersion program students responded to this question.

Most frequently, the respondents named a wide variety of stakeholders to report progress. Parents, teachers, and in somewhat fewer instances, students and district and Department officials were named as individuals or groups that should receive progress reports. In one instance by a Department official, it was suggested that anyone responsible for allocating resources should be included. One non-immersion parent also suggested the Department of Finance, as they are ultimately responsible for the budget and treasuries of the Province with the Department of Education responsible for the results.

In almost all instances, the most often held reason was so that the result can be used as a feedback mechanism where results are analysed and appropriate adjustments made to the curriculum. The students at an individual level should be included so they can understand their strengths and weaknesses and where to focus their efforts. More than one group suggested that students are ultimately accountable for their own learning.

Research Question 3.9

Who should be accountable for results achieved?

Outside experts, FSL supervisors, immersion parents and teachers were asked to respond to this research question.

Most respondents held that delivering effective education programs is a shared responsibility and a co-operative effort is required by everyone involved in the system. It was reported most frequently that there are multiple groups accountable at varying levels with teachers and administrators such as principals, Department and district officials stated most often. Other groups and individuals such as the NBTA, parents and students were also included in the responses.

One more than one occasion, parents suggested that teachers are accountable for meeting the curriculum standards and that the Department is accountable to ensure that the standards are in place and resources are available to support the program.

FSL supervisors suggested that in addition to many of the groups previously mentioned, accountability resides with those who have the ability and authority to make decisions.

Issue 4: "What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of FSL programs offerings?"

Research Question 4.1

Do the Department assessment programs in place allow for monitoring the progress in achieving program specific goals?

It was reported that there is formally only the grade 6 assessment in place. There is an existing service in the DoE at the request of government departments and agencies – cost for this.

Research Question 4.2

Should the provincial assessment be administered more often?

Reference the responses to 3.4 and 3.7:

FSL supervisors and a Department official suggested that grades 8 and 12 were appropriate points to evaluate oral, reading, and writing skills. Outside experts, and one other Department official held that students should be assessed in the same areas in grade 5 as well. Teachers suggested grades 4,8,10 and 12 as appropriate points for an evaluation of French oral skills of the students. Reference as well other responses in research question 3.4.

Research Question 4.3

What is the impact on the level of effort involved in administering more frequent provincial assessments?

The answers regarding specific levels of effort were somewhat vague. Budgetary concerns were raised as the main reason why pilot programs were not continued by the FSL supervisors and Department officials. The FSL supervisors written response stated that the FSL programs "...must be given the attention and time (they) deserved."

Research Question 4.4

Does the assessment programs in place provide useful information for the teachers to assist students in difficulty?

Non-immersion and immersion teachers and Departments officials responded to this research question. The most frequent response was that while the Oral Proficiency Exam in grade 12 helps to measure the relative overall success of the program, it does not help students at an individual level to help students in difficulty. Teachers generally stated that there are not adequate formal assessment programs in place in the early grades when it is most important to aid the challenged students. Some teachers reported that though there are no formal assessment products, they intuitively know the problem areas of struggling students. One group of teachers reflected that there are reports of some students having to wait up to two years for testing and other occasions where parents paid for private testing on account of long waiting periods. A group of immersion teachers perceived that there is a growing trend of special needs students enrolling in immersion, though there is a need for specialized resources and methods in this program.

Research Question 4.5

How do the current assessment programs help the teachers in their work?

Department officials, immersion teachers and FSL supervisors answered this research question.

A Department official and several FSL supervisors spoke to the formal Provincial assessments, and the teachers took the perspective of more informal in-class assessments vis-à-vis the student portfolios and student–teacher meetings. The Department administrator perceives that the Oral Proficiency Exam helps teachers to focus on oral skills development of the students and that the grade 6 assessments allows for teachers to reflect on their progress and make appropriate adjustments. All teacher groups reported that the in-class assessments previously mentioned help the teachers understand where to concentrate their efforts at a student and classroom level.

Research Question 4.6

How do the current assessment programs help the students in understanding their difficulties and where they should put their efforts?

Immersion and non-immersion students, Department officials and immersion teachers responded to this question.

The most frequent responses from students of both programs and teachers was that in-class assessments such as the students overall grades, student – teacher meetings and self – diagnosis on the part of the student are the most effective means of allowing students to better understand their difficulties and where to focus their efforts. All respondent groups stated that there are not enough assessment programs and almost as frequently, the groups reported that the current assessments are not effective. Many feel that the grade 12 Oral Proficiency Exam comes too late and that there should be an oral assessment in middle school.

Research Question 4.7

How is the information gained through the assessment program in place used to adjust curriculum, evaluation tools?

Teachers reported that the grade 6 assessment is sometimes helpful to judge the relative skills of the class and make appropriate adjustments.

Research Question 4.8

What other types of assessment exist in other second language education systems?

There are other frequently use Oral Proficiency Exams in many other jurisdictions across the country. For instance, Nova Scotia and the Ottawa Carlton School board administered oral tests to students.

Alberta uses their grade 6 reading and writing assessment that New Brunswick purchased from them. Alberta also has a grade 9 reading and writing assessment for French immersion students administered provincially.

New Brunswick does not seem to lag behind other jurisdictions in terms of administering assessments for FSL proficiency.

Research Question 4.9

How easy or difficult would it be to implement different assessments? What will be the impact on the Department?

It was reported, in some instances, by FSL supervisors and Department officials that due to budgetary concerns, pilot assessments were discontinued. Moreover, additional assessments do negatively affect the budget and time constraints on the Department.

Research Question 4.10

How easy or difficult would it be to implement different assessments?
What will be the impact on the students?

It was reported in other instances that additional teachers find assessments stressful on the students and themselves. Students reported generally feel that more oral assessments testing their oral French competencies would be helpful and in a few instances, reported that a writing assessment would additionally be helpful in grade 8.

Research Question 4.11

How easy or difficult would it be to implement different assessments?
What will be the impact on the teachers?

It was reported in other instances that additional teachers find assessments stressful on the students and teachers. Teachers are utilized to mark some assessments and this adds to their time commitments. Nonetheless, in most instances, teachers desire that more assessments be implemented.

Research Question 4.12

What are the benefits and drawbacks of the Grade 6 French reading and writing examinations?

It was reported by teacher groups, FSL supervisors and Department officials that the benefits of this assessment allow teachers to make appropriate adjustments based on classroom results. Drawbacks include the test was developed for French first language students, and though it is a good 'systems check', there is no feedback for students at an individual level.

Research Question 4.13

What is the rationale for not implementing Province wide and standardized oral testing exams at the classroom level?

Issue 5: To what extent are the identified objectives for the French Second Language Programs met?

Research Question 5.1

How many students in each program reach the identified objectives?

Level	Year	Core	Intermediate Immersion	Early Immersion
Basic or higher	94'-95'	92%	99%	100%
	95'-96'	93%	100%	100%
	96'-97'	95%	100%	100%
	97'-98'	95%	100%	100%
	98'-99'	96%	100%	100%
Basic Plus or higher	94'-95'	70%	88%	100%
	95'-96'	59%	100%	98%
	96'-97'	64%	96%	100%
	97'-98'	63%	100%	100%
	98'-99'	70%	100%	100%
Intermediate or higher*	94'-95'	30%*	88%	82%
	95'-96'	21%*	88%	97%
	96'-97'	25%*	90%	96%
	97'-98'	22%*	94%	99%
	98'-99'	25%*	93%	100%
Intermediate Plus or higher**	94'-95'	11	55%*	82%
	95'-96'	5%	36%*	83%
	96'-97'	6%	46%*	83%
	97'-98'	3%	47%*	84%
	98'-99'	2%	48%*	81%
Advanced or higher***	94'-95'	2%	7%	32%*
	95'-96'	2%	7%	32%*
	96'-97'	1%	15%	40%*
	97'-98'	1%	10%	37%*
	98'-99'	1%	11%	38%*

*Denotes core program goal **Denotes intermediate immersion goal ***Denotes early immersion goal

The five year average of core students passing and achieving their targeted objective of 'Intermediate' has been 25%, 46% of intermediate immersion students at 'Intermediate Plus' and 36% of the early immersion students at advanced plus. It was suggested by one group of outside experts that the objectives could be reduced one half level. This would adjust the percentage of core students at achieving Basic Plus to 65%, intermediate immersion students at Intermediate to 91% and early immersion students achieving Intermediate plus at 83%.

Research Question 5.2

Do the current assessment tools measure the level of achievement for specific objectives at each level?

Outside expert opinion held that only the grade 12 OPE measured the level of achievement for specific objectives at each level. We have not reviewed any documentation that would lead us to believe there are any other specific objectives at any other grade level.

Research Question 5.3

Does the fact that some students transfer between programs have an impact on the results of the current assessment?

Department officials responded to this question and were either unsure of the relative impact or believed that at one time it was perceived to be an issue. A solution provided was that when administering the OPE, that the students French background is stated. This means that if the student either transferred to another program or is from a bilingual family where French is spoke, this can be taken into consideration and the results appropriately identify a category of 'other'. The respondent stated that this might help to assess what is learned outside the classroom. We noted that Report Card 99' does state that the students from families where French is spoken in the home and students who have transferred to the non-immersion program from immersion programs are excluded from the core, early and intermediate immersion results.

Research Question 5.4

What are the reasons for the inability for a large number of students unable to achieve targeted objectives?

Department officials and immersion teachers revealed their perspective for research question 5.4. All participants stated that time on task policies as defined in 309 are not yet fully adhered to. A teacher group stated that due to a schedule change there were 60 minutes per week less spent learning French for high school students. The respondents also stated that high school course offerings in French are lacking. One teacher group suggested to not semester French in high school. Teacher groups frequently questioned the motivation to continue to learn French on the part of both students and their parents. One teacher group perceived that French becomes less important to students and parents in high school and math and sciences take priority, sometimes as early as grade 8, where the teachers have witnessed some students transferring to the non-immersion program where math and sciences are delivered in English.

Somewhat less frequently suggested by both groups was a concern over the French proficiency of the teachers delivering FSL programs. One immersion teacher group stated that there is pressure on immersion teachers to also teach in the core program where the behaviour, motivation and knowledge of the students is different from that in the immersion programs and this places additional stress on the teachers.

One Department official stated that the results are good and as Policy 309 is more broadly implemented, the results will improve.

Research Question 5.5

What information is available externally to explain the reasons for the low rate of achievement on the Oral Proficiency Exam?

Outside experts disagreed that there is a low rate of achievement. It was suggested that the high expectations could be reduced if the goals, in turn, are reduced one-half level. When the goals were initially put in place in 1994, they were considered reasonable at the time. It is not unreasonable that they are appropriately adjusted.

Issue 6: What is the impact of current French Second Language programs on the total population of anglophone students in the Province?

Research Question 6.1

What are the perceived positive aspects for the Non-immersion program and what evidence exists concerning the actual extent of these perceptions?

All groups responded with a variety of positive aspects of the non-immersion program. DPAC chairs or members on two occasions, responded to us that there were no positive aspects of the non-immersion program. The most popular responses from parents was that the non-immersion program perceived positive aspects were that the children can learn in their native language while learning some basic French. DPAC groups also agreed with the parents, though to a lesser degree. DPAC and parents also noted that learning French in the elementary grades allows for interested students to enter the intermediate immersion programs.

On only a few other occasions did groups share similar perspectives and always on only in a few instances. Parents and FSL supervisors noted that it the non-immersion program allows for parents to be more involved with their children's homework. This was considered more of a perception by the FSL supervisors and a real and perceived benefit to the parent groups. Canadian Parents for French and Parents both noted that the non-immersion program provides choices for parents. The parent groups noted that the non-immersion program provides options for children who struggle in the immersion programs. The CPF members noted that not all anglophone parents want their children educated in French. FSL supervisors and Canadian Parents for French both perceive that the "per capita personnel" in the non-immersion program is higher. One DPAC group suggested that though this was true in theory, based on discussions with many teachers and administrators this is not actually true.

Multiple parent groups, though no other groups provided the same perspective, reported that the non-immersion program:

- Provides the students with French cultural awareness;
- Provides opportunities for the students;
- Has a strong and up to date curriculum; and
- Suggested that the students science and math skills may be stronger.

Other single-group responses from parents in our discussion meetings include:

- The non-immersion program is for all children;
- Skilled teachers;
- Less stress on the students;
- Provides for greater flexibility to match students with teachers and to separate certain students because there are generally more non-immersion classrooms in the non-immersion program;
- There is a focus on subject matter content, not on learning a new language;
- Allows for many students to attend their community based school rather than bussing to a regional one for French immersion; and
- There is more work in the non-immersion program for the students.

Only the Canadian Parents for French suggested that there is more support from the school principals and administrators for the non-immersion program, though the FSL supervisors also suggested that many of the school administrators were educated in English and can communicate with the non-immersion program teachers.

Research Question 6.2

What are the perceived positive aspects for the Immersion programs and what evidence exists concerning the actual extent of these perceptions?

Immersion parents, teachers and students, as well as DPAC chairs, FSL supervisors and Canadian Parents for French responded to this question. All groups reported that either becoming bilingual or developing sound second language skills is a positive aspect of the immersion programs. Several groups referenced the performance of the Immersion students on the Oral Proficiency Exam in the Department's annual Report Card. Quite frequently and only with the exception of Canadian Parents for French, all groups reported, that an enhanced cultural awareness and appreciation is a positive aspect of the immersion programs. To further illustrate this point, students and parents, in areas where French is quite prevalent, that the immersion programs allow the students to blend into their community.

The most popular responses from parents of immersion students, immersion students, and immersion teachers are the increased number of job opportunities provided to bilingual students. FSL supervisors stated this as well. DPAC chairs to a lesser extent reported that job opportunities are a positive aspect of the immersion programs. Parent, teacher, student and DPAC also frequently reported that the students in immersion are often more confident and proud of their accomplishments. These same groups, with the

exception of DPAC chairs also reported that the behaviour of students in an immersion classroom is better than their non-immersion counterparts and that immersion presents greater challenges to the students.

There are several positive aspects that were noted by multiple groups, though on fewer occasions, typically by only one or two groups within a stakeholder set:

- Parents, students and teachers suggested that learning in French might further facilitate learning skills in general. Teachers noted Report Card results where immersion students perform at a higher level;
- Parents and students suggested it is easier to learn other languages and other subjects do not falter due to learning in French;
- There are better students in immersion classrooms as reported by students, teachers and DPAC chairs;
- Teachers and students reported that classroom sizes are smaller in immersion;
- Teachers, parents and DPAC suggested that immersion fosters independence, discipline for the students;
- A teacher group and DPAC chair suggested that there are younger, more energetic teachers in immersion;
- Teachers and students stated that immersion is 'fun' as it is a more active learning environment; and
- Parents and FSL supervisors suggested that more bilingual resources is better for attracting businesses and as a tourism destination for New Brunswick.

Teachers, quite frequently, reported that parental participation in school meetings and activities is greater by parents of immersion students and an important aspect of developing the motivation of students is an involved parent.

Research Question 6.3

What are the perceived negative aspects for the Non-immersion program and what evidence exists concerning the actual extent of these perceptions?

Non-immersion program teachers, parents of non-immersion students, DPAC chairs, and members and Canadian Parents for French were asked to provide their real and perceived negative aspects of the non-immersion program and evidence to support their perspective.

The most frequent and broad perspective is that there are more special needs students and behavioural problems in a non-immersion program classroom. This perspective stated most often by teachers parents and DPAC and less so by students. Some teachers and parents provided specific examples of the number of special needs children in a non-immersion classroom over an immersion classroom in a particular school or

grade level. Teachers also suggested that of the special needs cases, they are more severe in the non-immersion program. In the same manner it was also suggested, though less frequently by the same groups, that there are a wider variety of learners in the non-immersion program. Teachers groups stated that 'streaming' occurs were the best students enter immersion. A teacher group held that their perception is that many parents of special needs children enrol their children in non-immersion because the immersion programs cannot adequately support the needs of special needs students in the classroom.

On a few occasions from teachers and from the Canadian Parents for French and the FSL supervisors, it was reported that the required levels of French proficiency is not always attained by the teachers tasked to teacher the core French program.

Parents repeatedly suggested that non-immersion classrooms are larger and to a lesser degree, teachers agreed. Teachers, Parents and DPAC chairs also reported that 'elitism' exists, whereby students who come from favourable economic backgrounds and have a positive support structure in the home more regularly enter the immersion programs.

Due to the above perspectives, the same groups brought forward many indirect negative perspectives including:

- The parents frequently reported that weaker students are in the non-immersion program, and less so stated that teachers stream less academically inclined students into the non-immersion program;
- The parents suggested there is a negative stigma attached to the non-immersion program;
- There are gender balance concerns where more boys are in the non-immersion program than girls. This perception is confirmed in the table below;
- Parents and students stated that the more academically inclined students are not sufficiently challenged in the non-immersion program;
- DPAC representatives and parents suggested that teachers and students have lower expectations of non-immersion program students;
- Inconsistent curriculum is delivered across the Province was suggested by parents and DPAC chairs; and
- Parents reported a lack of resources for the number of special needs children that are enrolled in the non-immersion program.

1999 Gender Percentages – In the Anglophone System versus the Immersion Programs.

	% Immersion Students (By Gender)	Total Student Population (By gender)

female	55%	43.8%
male	45%	56.2%
total	100%	100%

Source: Summary statistics School Year 1999-2000. Prepared by Policy and Planning Department of Education.

Parents, students, DPAC representatives, and FSL supervisors suggested there is a lack of time spent learning French in the core program, most evidently in high school. The DPAC chairs focussed their attention on the lack of oral French skills of the students. This is reported to be either due to semestering, where the student spends one semester per year learning French or schedule conflicts between French and more critical courses.

FSL supervisors, Canadian Parents for French and students reported that many non-immersion students are either less interested or not motivated to learn French. CPF members and the FSL supervisors stated this is more evident in middle and high school. CPF members suggested that this attitude might be derived from the students' parents who have a negative attitude towards the French language or to bilingualism. CPF members and FSL supervisors also noted that there is not a requirement for core students to pass French in Grade 9 and 10 as long as the student maintains a 60% average. Only the CPF representatives suggested that some non-immersion French teachers have a negative attitude and this is reflected on the students.

Only students (in one discussion meeting) noted that it is difficult to deliver immersion in rural areas of the Province.

Except where noted, there was little amount of empirical evidence provided. Most perspectives were of an anecdotal nature through experience in the classroom or discussions with others.

Research Question 6.4

What are the perceived negative aspects for the Immersion programs and what evidence exists concerning the actual extent of these perceptions?

Immersion students, parents of immersion students, immersion programs teachers, DPAC representatives, Canadian Parents for French representatives and FSL supervisors responded to this question. The answers were varied, though many of the groups did not disagree with a particular perspective, rather the perspective was simply not stated at the discussion meeting.

Parents, teachers, and FSL supervisors frequently reported that there is a lack of resource and methods resources for the immersion programs. Interestingly, more parents and teachers reported that streaming is evident and is sometimes due to the lack of resources to support special needs children.

A few groups of parents, students and teachers stated there is too much distinction between the non-immersion and immersion programs. For instance, the students noted that they are often separated from their friends, and teachers stated that immersion classrooms often remain together year over year and there are not 'new beginnings' for the students.

Multiple groups reported that there are not enough French course offerings in high school for immersion students and that the student's French proficiency decreases starting in grade 9. Multiple student groups and one group of parents, teachers and DPAC representatives noted this weakness of the immersion programs.

Some groups of parents, teachers and students feel that the immersion student's math and English skills are not as strong as the non-immersion students are. Some of the parents stated that this is a perception only and is not reality. Multiple student groups reported that the English language arts curriculum is not as strong in immersion and that the transition to grade 9 math and science can sometimes be challenging.

A few student groups noted teacher proficiency either in a particular subject or in French. FSL supervisors similarly noted that some teacher's French proficiency is not sufficient and that is due to pressure on administrators and by not adhering to Policy 309. Parents, students and teachers reported that the proficiency of supply teachers is lacking, most notably in rural areas.

Parents, students and teachers reported lack of French resources such as books. As well, one group of students stated that the quality of the French books was low.

FSL supervisors and Canadian Parents for French stated that several misconceptions concerning immersion are negative aspects of the program. These groups reported that many individuals believe immersion is for the students from higher SES backgrounds but cited research by Holobow, Chartrand and Lambert that there are no statistically significant differences regarding this element of concern. As, well, the FSL supervisors stated that Margaret Bruck and Fred Genesee have both produced studies that showed students with lower than average intelligence, behavioural problems and learning disabilities would perform at levels equal to the one another in either program provided similar support is provided to address the problem areas.

Other responses where there was only a single group of respondents providing a particular perspective are:

- A teacher group stated that the priority of immersion should be learning the language and culture of French but that parents are more concerned with English, math and sciences;
- A teacher group reported that interest groups lobbying for Immersion has had a negative impact on the non-immersion program;
- Teachers are 'challenged' to determine what to do with weak students in immersion;
- Teaches suggested that that immersion has become a political issue, not one about students desiring to learn a second language; and
- Parents suggested there is an increased pressure on the students to perform in immersion.

Research Question 6.5

What are the perceived non-immersion program classroom conditions created by the immersion programs? What evidence do you have to support your position?

Non-immersion program students, parents, and teachers, DPAC representatives, Canadian Parents for French and FSL supervisors participated in this research question.

More behavioural problems and a higher percentage of special needs children were the most frequent responses of teachers, parents and DPAC, and fewer students. Along the same lines CPF members and FSL supervisors suggested that the non-immersion program is the only program that offers specialized resource and methods support. For this reason, parents will select the non-immersion program if there are concerns with the abilities of their children to ensure they receive the support that is required. One parent group reported the same perspective as the FSL supervisors and CPF members.

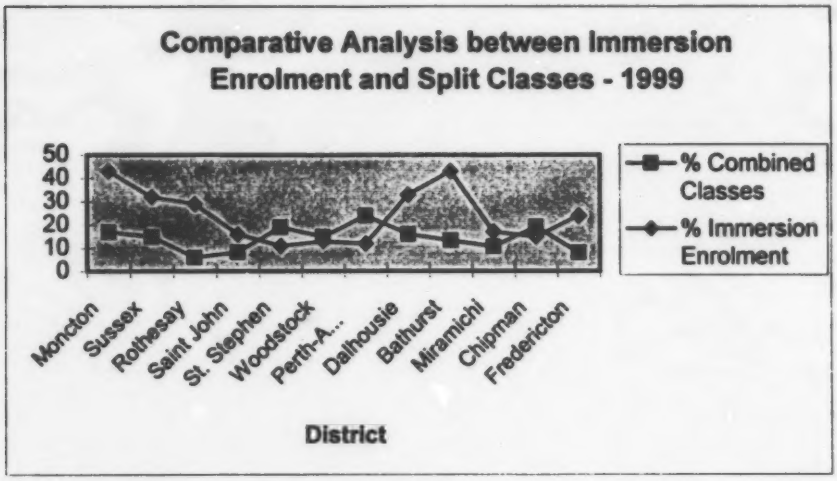
A symptom of the higher degree of special needs students and behavioural problems in the non-immersion classroom reported by teachers, parents and students are:

- Teachers spend a high percentage of teaching time with fewer students;
- The bright students in the non-immersion program are not challenged; and
- The non-immersion students reported in one instance that 'they are treated differently' and parents more frequently reported that there are self-esteem issues with non-immersion program children.

Multiple student groups and one DPAC representative suggested that there are no impacts on the non-immersion program due to having immersion programs. Multiple teacher and parent groups also reported that class sizes are perceived to be larger. One parent group reported that due to immersion class sizes are smaller.

Only the FSL supervisors and CPF members reported that envy and animosity is created to the success of the immersion programs.

A few groups reported that more split classes are created to having multiple programs in place. The table below which shows immersion enrolment and the number of combined classes by district does not indicate inconclusively that there might be a correlation.



Overall enrolment is decreasing by an average of 1% per annum, while at the same time immersion enrolment rates are growing. The number of split classes has increased from 194 in 1988 to 248 in 1992 to a 329 in 1998.

Research Question 6.6

What are the perceived immersion program classroom conditions created by the immersion programs? What evidence do you have to support your position?

Immersion teachers, parents, DPAC representatives, CFP and FSL supervisors responded to this research question. There were limited disagreements on the part of this set of interested groups and are noted in the summary of findings below.

The most widely held perspective is that there is not adequate resource and methods support in the immersion programs. One DPAC group, the CPF members, one teacher and two parent groups suggested this line of thought.

Teachers, parents and DPAC representatives more frequently reported that there are fewer perceived behavioural problems in an immersion classroom and there is a higher concentration of better, more motivated learners with fewer Specialized Education Plan (SEP) students than the Non-immersion program. On a few occasions, the groups noted that there is a greater distinction between the non-immersion students and intermediate immersion students rather than the early immersion students. Two teacher groups responded that the immersion students are an elite group and may come from advantaged households. One DPAC representative challenged this perspective and suggested that if immersion is an elitist program, it is the creation of the administration due to a lack of support for the immersion programs.

Teachers and parents noted that there are often smaller classes in immersion, though one group of parents suggested that class sizes are actually larger.

One group of parents and DPAC chair stated there are no differences between the non-immersion and immersion classrooms.

One parent group and the CPF members and French Second Language supervisors noted that the immersion classroom has a more active learning environment.

On only limited occasions and reported by only one group, the following was reported:

- A teacher group suggested that having multiple programs creates more combined classes;
- A teacher group responded that there is a perceived notion that there are more field trips and enriching activities in immersion;
- A parent group suggested that not all immersion teachers are proficient in English, while others are not proficient in French. Multiple parent groups suggested that many supply teachers are not sufficiently proficient in French; and
- One more than one occasion, teachers feel that students have higher expectations of their performance and are more demanding of the program, placing added pressure on the immersion teachers.

The majority of evidence was opinion based, with some hypothetical figures provided to describe the imbalance of higher-level learners in the immersion programs by teachers.

Research Question 6.7

To what extent does streaming occur resulting in the best students entering the immersion programs? What evidence do you have to support your position?

The majority of respondents from parents of immersion students, parents of non-immersion students, non-immersion teachers, and DPAC representatives reported that streaming is evident in both the early and intermediate immersion programs. Less frequently these same groups stated that streaming is more apparent in intermediate immersion. Immersion teachers equally reported that streaming is evident at every stage and that it is more apparent in intermediate immersion.

It was reported that in some cases, students self select, though the majority of groups stated that parents, students, teachers and administrators are responsible for streaming students into one program over another. Parents of non-immersion students most frequently suggested that parents stream in early immersion and there is a wider group that is involved in the decision for intermediate immersion. One group of immersion parents and an equal number of immersion teachers responded that there is no streaming at any level and that there is an option for all parents to select their choice of programs.

It was interesting to note that one group of non-immersion teachers suggested that streaming is more prevalent now and two stated that streaming is not as prevalent as it once was and has stabilized.

FSL supervisors, Canadian Parents for French, and one group of teachers from both programs stated that if there were more resource and methods resources in immersion that there would be even wider participation and would reduce the socio-economic division. Multiple groups of immersion programs teachers suggested that there is a correlation between favourable socio-economic status indicators and a positive support structure in the homes of immersion students and enrolment in the immersion programs. Only one group of immersion parents suggested that the immersion students have a more positive home environment.

One group of immersion parents, teachers, DPAC representatives Canadian parents for French and the FSL supervisors suggested that intermediate immersion may attract the more motivated students that are prepared to face a more challenging program.

Detail surrounding this question and issue 6 in general elicited the most written and oral responses to us outside of the discussion meeting discussion questions. The NBTA written stated that "many, many" teachers reported the non-immersion classrooms have an "unacceptably high number of students with learning disabilities, academic difficulties and behaviour problems". The majority of respondents agree that streaming occurs where the 'best and brightest' students are enrolled in the immersion programs, most notably in intermediate immersion.

Research Question 6.9

Why did you enrol your child in French immersion?

Immersion Parents were asked why they selected immersion for their child(ren). Most frequently the response that there are more job opportunities for a bilingual person. Just as many respondents stated that the selection of immersion was to provide an added challenge. Almost as many parents suggested that classroom conditions was a reason for selecting the immersion programs over the non-immersion program. The next most popular response was the exposure and appreciation of the French culture immersion provides. A few respondents stated that in their region of New Brunswick it is socially more beneficial to be bilingual. The same number of respondents stated that a teacher suggested the immersion program for their child.

Research Question 6.10

What is the average class size for each of the immersion programs?

Course Enrolment in Grade 11 and 12 (1999-2000)		
District	Average class size for Immersion (Grade 11 &12)	Average class size for Non-immersion (Grade 11 & 12)
02	24.45	19.44
04	21.73	16.43
06	20.42	18.56
08	19.64	19.64
10	22.25	15.87
12	21.83	16.73
13	11.83	15.35
14	24.43	18.55
15	27.63	21.83
16	24.33	19.63
17	21.30	19.95
18	28.35	22.04
Total average	22.35	18.67

School District		Grade Level K	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
02 -	Moncton	0.0	22.0	22.4	23.0	23.6	24.3	24.5	18.6	18.4
04 -	Sussex	25.0	20.4	24.3	23.2	26.3	28.3	22.9	30.1	25.8
06 -	Rothesay	0.0	21.1	23.4	27.4	23.8	24.7	24.1	23.5	25.2
08 -	Saint John	0.0	20.8	25.2	29.8	29.1	22.3	28.6	25.3	26.6
10 -	St. Stephen	0.0	25.0	18.0	16.0	19.0	0.0	20.7	26.5	25.0
12 -	Woodstock	0.0	22.0	22.5	0.0	0.0	0.0	28.2	30.0	18.8
13 -	Perth-Andover	0.0	20.1	21.9	26.5	22.7	20.5	22.3	26.2	23.7
14 -	Dalhousie	25.0	22.0	23.0	22.3	17.3	24.0	20.0	20.4	17.6
15 -	Bathurst	0.0	22.5	26.0	26.0	30.0	25.7	19.5	23.7	23.7
16 -	Miramichi	0.0	28.3	22.0	23.7	19.8	31.5	26.3	21.8	28.0
17 -	Chipman	0.0	20.8	22.3	27.1	24.3	25.2	30.2	28.8	26.8
18 -	Fredericton	0.0	20.1	21.6	22.6	22.8	21.3	26.9	29.6	20.6
Total		25.0	21.6	23.7	25.6	24.9	24.6	26.6	26.1	24.2

The overall average class size is 24.7.

Research Question 6.11

What is the average class size for regular English class (Non-immersion)?

School District		Grade Level K	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08
02 -	Moncton	20.2	18.8	20.7	23.8	23.5	24.7	24.1	16.7	18.3
04 -	Sussex	20.1	22.7	22.2	23.9	24.7	27.1	28.4	31.2	25.9
06 -	Rothesay	21.7	22.1	22.5	25.3	25.3	26.2	25.7	27.3	26.0
08 -	Saint John	20.5	21.1	23.2	24.0	25.4	24.8	25.1	25.3	26.0
10 -	St. Stephen	19.4	21.6	22.4	22.4	23.6	23.7	24.4	24.6	23.9
12 -	Woodstock	22.0	21.3	24.2	25.2	25.2	25.9	24.1	27.8	27.2

13 -	Perth-Andover	20.6	21.1	21.7	23.3	22.4	21.8	24.8	24.8	22.0
14 -	Dalhousie	22.4	24.2	27.2	25.5	22.2	22.9	18.8	22.2	19.1
15 -	Bathurst	20.9	24.2	20.8	22.1	22.8	25.1	25.5	21.3	19.0
16 -	Miramichi	18.5	20.6	21.0	23.8	26.0	25.3	23.8	25.6	27.7
17 -	Chipman	21.0	22.4	22.8	25.7	26.5	25.4	24.3	26.0	26.0
18 -	Fredericton	20.7	20.0	22.9	24.9	24.2	25.2	26.1	27.4	22.1
Total		**21.2**	**22.7**	**24.4**	**26.0**	**26.8**	**26.5**	**25.3**	**25.2**	**24.0**

The overall average class size is 25.1.

Research Question 6.13

What is the average length of teaching experience of the immersion teachers? Core Student teacher?

The overall age of teachers in a sample of 5099 teachers was 42.78 years with an average experience of 14.99 years. The sample of 304 French immersion teachers revealed an average age of 38.19 years and average experience of 11.23.

Research Question 6.14

What is the definition of 'special needs' students?

The Education Act, February 1997, states that "...behavioural, communicational, intellectual, physical, perceptual, or multiple exceptionalities of a person are contributing to delayed educational development such that a special education program is considered by the director of education to be necessary for the person..." and.... "Where an exceptional pupil is not able to receive a special education program or service in a school due to

(a) fragile health, hospitalization, or convalescence, or
(b) a condition or need which requires a level of care that cannot be provided effectively in a school setting"

Research Question 6.15

What conditions are prevalent in other SL jurisdictions similar to NB?

NB is the only officially bilingual province and as such is unique in Canada. There are other areas where multiple entry points for immersion exist. NB has the best policies for anglophone children. The merits of a bilingual education beyond jobs are not advertised according to the outside researchers.

In a 1998 study on immersion it was suggested that similar conditions might be prevalent in the Ottawa – Carlton School Board.

Appendix B - New Brunswick Second Language Oral Proficiency Exam Scale

(Source: Province of New Brunswick website)

The goal of the **Core French program** is to develop in students a degree of proficiency in their second official language, corresponding to the Intermediate level of the New Brunswick Second Language Proficiency Scale (oral component).

The goal of the **Early French Immersion program** is to develop in students a degree of proficiency in their second official language, corresponding to the Advanced level of the New Brunswick Second Language Proficiency Scale (all components).

The goal of the **Intermediate French Immersion program** is to develop a degree of proficiency in their second official language, corresponding to the Intermediate Plus level of the New Brunswick Second Language Proficiency Scale (all components).

BASIC:

Able to satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face conversations on familiar topics. Reading component skills include the ability to pick out main ideas and key words in familiar materials. Able to produce text which expresses needs and ideas in an undeveloped manner.

INTERMEDIATE:

Able to satisfy routine social demands and limited work requirements. Can handle routine work-related interactions that are limited in scope. In more complex and sophisticated work-related tasks, language usage generally disturbs the native speaker. Can handle with confidence, but not with facility, most normal, high-frequency social conversational situations including extensive, but casual, conversations about current events, as well as work, family and autobiographical information. The individual can get the gist of most everyday conversations but has some difficulty understanding native speakers in situations that require specialized or sophisticated knowledge. The individual's utterances are minimally cohesive. Linguistic structure is usually not very elaborate and not thoroughly controlled; errors are frequent. Vocabulary use is appropriate for high-frequency utterances, but unusual or imprecise elsewhere.

INTERMEDIATE PLUS:

Able to satisfy most work requirements with language usage that is often, but not always, acceptable and effective. The individual shows considerable ability to communicate effectively on topics relating to particular interests and special fields of competence. Often shows a high degree of fluency and ease of speech, yet when under tension or pressure, the ability to use the language effectively may deteriorate. Often shows strength in either grammar or vocabulary, but not both. Comprehension of normal native speech is typically nearly complete. The individual may miss cultural and local references and may require a native speaker to adjust to his/her limitations in some ways. Native speakers often perceive the individual's speech to contain awkward or inaccurate phrasing of ideas, mistaken time, space, and person references, or to be in some way inappropriate, if not strictly incorrect.

ADVANCED:

Able to speak the language with sufficient structural accuracy and vocabulary to participate effectively in most formal and informal conversations on practical, social, and professional topics. Nevertheless, the individual's limitations generally restrict the professional contexts of language use to matters of shared knowledge and/or international convention. Discourse is cohesive. The individual uses the language acceptably, but with some noticeable imperfections; yet errors virtually never interfere with understanding and rarely disturb the native speaker. The individual can effectively combine structure and vocabulary to convey his/her meaning accurately. The individual speaks readily and fills pauses suitably. In face-to-face conversation with natives speaking the standard dialect at a normal rate of speech, comprehension is quite complete. Although cultural references, proverbs, and the implications of nuances and idioms may not be fully understood, the individual can easily repair the conversation. Pronunciation may be obviously foreign. Individual sounds are accurate; but stress, intonation and pitch control may be faulty.

SUPERIOR:

Speaks effortlessly and smoothly and is able to use the language with a high degree of effectiveness, reliability and precision, but is not normally taken for a native speaker. Reading components are the ability to understand most material on concrete and abstract topics (familiar and non-familiar). Also, able to produce text that is always appropriate to the purpose and the audience.

NEW BRUNSWICK
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

FRENCH SECOND LANGUAGE (FSL)
PROGRAM REVIEW

RECOMMENDATIONS

SEPTEMBER 15, 2000

PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPERS LLP
SAINT JOHN, NB
E2L 4B9

We have developed and now offer for consideration, recommendations specific to each issue on which this evaluation focused as well as a number of recommendations that cut across issues.

Our recommendations take into consideration the important requirement for the Department of Education to provide a stable environment for the students, teachers and administrators of the current program.

Recommendations Associated with Issue 1: What is the most effective French Second Language Program (FSL) organization that can be used to achieve the goals for FSL instruction in New Brunswick?

We recommend that officials of the Department of Education act to preserve as many conditions as possible of the entry point features of the present program. Specifically, it is our recommendation that both early and later entry points be maintained.

Our recommendation should not be interpreted to suggest that we are or are not recommending maintaining entry point features as they currently exist (i. e. grade 1 and grade 6). The Department may, at some time, be required to respond to challenges that preclude offering these specific grade entry levels. One such condition may well be fiscal pressures now experienced and anticipated by the Provincial government. One outcome of these pressures could well be restraints on Public sector programs.

Rather, our recommendation focuses on the evident benefits of and broad support we noticed for early exposure to the immersion program, with the added option of allowing for a later entry opportunity.

We recommend increased time on task activities, specifically focussed on strengthening oral skills, in both the core program and the immersion program. These were the most frequently perceived areas where program strengthening is warranted. Increasing these features of the FSL program could improve success in retaining students through grade 12 as well as improving the results on the oral proficiency exam administered by the Department.

Recommendation associated with Issue 2: "What viable alternatives are there to the current programs in terms of improving every student's FSL proficiency with respect to entry points and cost efficiency?"

Various conditions especially those related to fiscal conditions, could arise that require the officials to adjust the FSL program. In such circumstances, we recommend that serious consideration be given to implementing the Grade 3/ Grade 6 immersion entry option as outlined in Alternative 1, which we assessed, along with the core FSL arrangements as outlined in Alternative 2. The core FSL features of Alternative 2 include compulsory French language arts to Grade 8 with full year instruction in Grades 9 and 10. As we point out in our report, we detected limited support for many alternatives, including this one. Nevertheless, we consider the following as the advantages of this adjustment:

- Students will have the opportunity for an additional two years of educational performance before initial decisions concerning immersion entry will have to be made. This period will allow for a more comprehensive assessment of their immersion performance potential and for remedial measures to be implemented (in the student's first language) where warranted;

- The additional two years of instruction in the students' first language should result in increases in performance assessment scores in those areas where current early entry students now demonstrate lower levels of performance than their non-immersion counterparts;

- This adjustment allows for a second immersion entry point (as does the present structure);

- Any cost savings due to implementing this adjustment could be allocated for assessment and diagnostic resource materials such as early grade diagnostic tools for immersion students; and

- Non-immersion students who choose to continue with the core French program into Grades 9 and 10 will receive increased FSL instruction over the levels now offered to them, thus increasing the time on task and oral proficiency instruction features of the current program.

Recommendations associated with Issue 3: "How valid and reliable are the assessment programs currently in place?"

In our view, there is sound evidence to conclude that the Department wide assessment programs now in place, (namely the Grade 12 Oral Proficiency Test and the Grade 6 French Second Language Proficiency exam) are valid and reliable. While there are areas in which these instruments can be considered to be lacking, we consider these to be of limited consequence. Further, we conclude that there is not sufficient reason, including cost effectiveness, to increase the level of system wide proficiency testing through the present methods of administration.

We recommend strengthening the range and level of testing aids available to assess individual progress and performance. The improved aids should also be focussed on allowing FSL students and teachers to identify specific weaknesses.

We recommend an improved system of FSL program monitoring. The areas that should be included in the strengthened monitoring system are the following aspects of FSL program delivery, as a minimum:

- Teacher proficiency and to a lesser extent competencies related to second language pedagogy and subject matter expertise. While we noticed that teacher proficiency was periodically raised by selected groups as a weakness of the FSL program, we could not consistently find valid and reliable evidence to support this perception. It is the responsibility of the Department to monitor adherence to Policy 309 conditions that ensure the conditions concerning Teacher competency are met;
- Time on task adherence to Policy 309;
- Adequate resource and methods availability for immersion students;
- Pupil Educator Ratios, especially at the school level; and
- Curriculum adherence and consistency throughout the Province.

As monitoring and accountability are in our view, closely related management conditions, we recommend clarification of roles and responsibilities associated with the FSL program accountability.

Recommendation associated with Issue 4: "What kind of assessment procedures can be used to provide a valid and reliable evaluation of FSL program offerings?"

We recommend increased and more effective in-class and teacher led assessments of FSL students. Beyond more and a broader range of assessment materials, additional assurances are required concerning the validity and reliability of assessment materials now being applied at an in-class level.

Recommendations associated with Issue 5: To what extent are the identified objectives for the French Second Language Programs met?

We recommend clarification of the FSL program objectives as they relate to target OPE scores associated with FSL program success at the Province wide level. At the present time many groups involved in the Program, directly and indirectly, claim that the Department does not have defined thresholds for the OPE results which would determine reasonable results.

We recommend that Department officials define a target relating to FSL program retention both at the core and immersion levels. As well, we recommend that Department Officials adopt and monitor a strategy designed to achieve the retention target.

Recommendations associated with Issue 6: What is the impact of the current FSL programs on the total population of anglophone students in the province?"

We noticed widespread and negative comments concerning the perception of a streaming effect within the non-immersion program. We were unable to collect sufficient data and information to allow us to conclude on the degree to which any or all of the conditions reflecting this streaming effect occur or to what magnitude. However, we note that officials of the Department agree that some of these conditions may be occurring in selected locations and to some degree.

In our view, the Department must examine this situation more thoroughly and where warranted, act to reduce these conditions.

We recommend immediate activities to determine the following:

- Aspects of the immersion program which could benefit the French language instruction in the core program. Where more effective instructional aids and teaching resources are identified in the immersion program activities should be initiated to transfer these and their use to the core program;

- Pupil – Educator Ratio (PER) differences between the immersion and non-immersion programs,
  especially at the school level. The Department must identify a maximum PER for the non-immersion program at the school level which, in the opinion of Department officials, will ensure that each student receives an adequate amount of instructor attention; and

- Specialist learning resources available to non-immersion program instructional environments. The Department must ensure that a reasonable resource standard exists at the school level for both programs. In our view "reasonable" should reflect well thought out conditions that are based on the standards applied in other provinces.

Additional Recommendations

We recommend an improved communications strategy and program associated with many aspects of the FSL program. Specifically, we recommend that Department officials define and implement enhanced communications associated with the following:

- Program goals and objectives. We found the current goals and objectives to have the support of most of those involved, directly and indirectly, in the FSL program. At the same time, we detected significantly lower levels of understanding of these goals among parents of non-immersion students in comparison to the parents of immersion students. Concurrently, we noted that parents of the immersion students have a series of expectations concerning the benefits of the FSL program to their children that go beyond the stated goals of the program. These broader objectives, many of which in our view are of an educational and social development nature, may not always be subservient to the stated goals and objectives of the FSL program. We suspect that these broader goals may often shape the expectations parents

of immersion students place on the program. More attention to communicating the goals of the program, especially during the parent information sessions that are used to acquaint parents with the FSL programs prior to the immersion entry points, could improve these situations. As well, efforts to reinforce these goals at an ongoing level, well after immersion entry points, will assist the situation;

- Average class size. We received many comments suggesting that immersion classes were smaller than those housing the non-immersion classes. The perception exists that the smaller class size allows for a more effective learning environment;

- Resources available to respond to learning challenges students experience in the immersion and the non-immersion programs. We encountered comments concerning the perception that many parents have concerning the level of specialist resources in the immersion program. It appears that many parents of non-immersion students are of the belief that this contributes to outcomes relating to streaming. (I.e. Students with learning difficulties cannot receive the remedial attention they require while registered in the immersion program. Thus, the belief is that they are counselled out of the immersion program and become students of the non-immersion program, thereby increasing the size of and the number of students with special needs in the non-immersion program.) At the same time, some parents and teachers of immersion programs strongly support the strengthening of specialist resources for remedial and prescriptive activities for students who are experiencing learning challenges;

- Compliance of various program features with Policy 309. Given the comments we received concerning Time on Task and the teaching qualifications of instructor groups (we found no sound evidence to support the perception that teaching skills are lacking), we recommend that these levels of compliance be included in a strengthened communications strategy;

- Guidelines associated with responses to in-class behaviour problem situations. Again, we noted a number of comments from non-immersion parents relating to the number of such situations and the perceived impact of these in the in-class learning environment; and

- Longitudinal information concerning the frequency with which persons who have completed the immersion program actually gain employment in a situation where conversing in French is a defined requirement of employment.

We recommend improved use of Internet and web based technologies to provide the additional assessment and diagnostic resources that the FSL program requires. We understand that the capability exists for the Department to capture a voice or voice/video record of interactive dialogue between the student and the evaluator. The Department should explore the possibilities of including in this web-based initiative an oral skill assessment service for all FSL students. Oral skill assessments could be provided for Province-wide Competency Testing and at an "on demand" level. There are a number of options for developing and delivering this type of oral skill assessment service, which would have to be part of the examination the Department conducted in determining the feasibility of implementing this recommendation.

Some of these include:

- Working within web enabled service initiatives now being considered by Service New Brunswick;

- Structuring a relationship with private sector participants to develop and deliver this improved level of service;

- Determining appropriate measures to control costs associated with the "on demand oral skill assessment" aspects of the service. This may involve a user contribution arrangement; and

- Linking the initiative with a broader based concept to improve web based education services to teachers, students and their parents.

We consider that the above are the most important initiatives that the Department should consider as a result of this evaluation. We recognize that various groups attach urgency to the adjustments they believe are necessary to improve the FSL program. Realistically, Department officials should be accorded the opportunity to undertake any additional research and consultations necessary to conclude on these recommendations and implement those that are judged to be warranted and feasible. We further understand that implementing many, if not each of the above

recommendations, will include fiscal considerations. Finally, we strongly recommend that Departmental officials adopt a strategy of implementing an "improvement package" of change in the FSL program, rather than a "piece meal" approach.

It is our understanding that the Fiscal 2000 – 2001 budget will be finalized towards the end of this year. This may be too soon to allow for all the information and considerations that must be applied to conclude on our recommendations and the concurrent "package" of improvements that may be implemented. Accordingly, we recommend that Departmental officials establish September 2002 as the earliest for implementing any adjustments in the FSL program.